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Perceived Professional and Ethical Risks of AI-Driven Automated News Reporting among Registered Journalists in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Artificial intelligence (AI) and automated reporting are reshaping journalism by improving the speed and efficiency of news production. However, their use raises concerns about misinformation, algorithmic bias, professional judgement, accountability, employment, and public trust.

Objective: This study examined registered journalists' awareness of the risks associated with automated reporting, their perceptions of its implications for journalism practice, and strategies for mitigating these risks in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Methodology: A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population comprised 342 registered journalists, from which 181 were selected using simple random sampling. Of these, 174 returned usable questionnaires, constituting the final sample. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87. The data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Results: The findings revealed a high level of awareness of automated reporting risks (Grand Mean = 4.02), particularly those relating to misinformation, algorithmic bias, ethics, and accountability. Respondents also perceived significant implications for accuracy, credibility, professional roles, accountability, and public trust (Grand Mean = 4.09). They expressed strong support for independent verification, professional training, human editorial oversight, organisational guidelines, and accountability procedures as measures for mitigating these risks (Grand Mean = 4.19).

Conclusion: Responsible adoption of automated reporting requires adequate professional safeguards to ensure that automation complements rather than replaces human journalistic judgement, verification, and accountability.

Recommendation: Media organisations should strengthen human verification practices, provide regular professional training, and establish clear editorial and accountability guidelines for automated reporting.

Unique Contribution: The study provides state-level evidence of journalists' perceptions of the risks and safeguards associated with automated reporting, extending Nigerian scholarship beyond the media environments more frequently examined in existing research.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, automated reporting, journalism practice, perceived risks, registered journalists, Ebonyi State.

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INTRODUCTION

Journalism has traditionally relied on human professionals to gather information, evaluate sources, verify facts, interpret events, and produce news. These functions require editorial judgement, professional ethics, contextual understanding, and accountability. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), however, is transforming aspects of newsroom work through applications such as transcription, translation, data analysis, fact-checking, content recommendation, and news production (Adjin-Tettey et al., 2024; Park & Akintade, 2026). These developments have raised questions about professional roles, editorial decision-making, and accountability.

AI in journalism is a broad concept encompassing computational systems that perform tasks associated with human intelligence, whereas automated journalism refers more specifically to the automation of news collection, production, and distribution. Automated reporting, the focus of this study, involves the automated or semi-automated generation of news reports from structured data, databases, templates, or other machine-readable sources, often with limited human intervention (Wang Ngai Yeung & Dodds, 2024). It is particularly suited to routine, data-driven areas such as sports, finance, weather, and election reporting, where large volumes of information can be processed rapidly.

Although automated reporting can increase the speed and scale of news production, it may also alter responsibilities traditionally performed by journalists. Its use raises professional and ethical concerns relating to misinformation, algorithmic bias, inadequate contextual understanding, accountability, and reduced editorial control. Automated systems may reproduce errors or biases in their underlying data and generate content without sufficient human scrutiny. Accountability may also become complicated when responsibility for inaccurate content is shared among journalists, editors, media organisations, technology developers, and automated systems.

Consequently, responsible AI research in journalism emphasises transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy, human oversight, and disclosure of AI-generated content (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2024). Automation may also affect professional roles by reducing the need for some routine reporting tasks and changing the skills and responsibilities required of journalists. For instance, Onwe et al. (2024) found low adoption of automated journalism among registered journalists in Enugu State, alongside concerns about future employment and professional security. Other Nigerian studies have similarly identified concerns about accuracy, bias, accountability, professional autonomy, and changing journalistic roles (Bello et al., 2023; Gbaden et al., 2024; Umeora, 2025).

Evidence from different Nigerian media environments suggest that experiences with and perceptions of AI and automation may vary according to organisational and professional contexts. Bello et al. (2023) found that journalists in Lagos and Kwara States recognised the benefits of AI while expressing concerns about its implications for conventional journalism practice. In South-East Nigeria, Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2024) reported considerable awareness of AI tools among journalists but identified limitations in their practical knowledge and

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application. Similarly, Onwe et al. (2024) reported concerns about employment and professional security among journalists in Enugu State.

However, these studies have largely examined AI and automated journalism generally rather than focusing specifically on the professional and ethical risks of automated reporting. This gap makes Ebonyi State a relevant context for investigation. The state remains relatively under-researched in empirical studies of AI and automated reporting. Furthermore, differences in digital infrastructure, organisational capacity, professional training, and exposure to emerging newsroom technologies may influence journalists' perceptions of automation. Findings from other Nigerian media environments cannot, therefore, be assumed to represent the experiences and perceptions of registered journalists in Ebonyi State.

Against this background, the present study examines registered journalists' awareness of the risks associated with automated reporting, their perceived implications for journalism practice, and strategies for mitigating these risks in Ebonyi State. By focusing on a defined state-level professional population, the study provides context-specific evidence that contributes to the broader Nigerian discourse on the responsible integration of automated technologies into journalism.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing application of automated reporting is changing aspects of news production and raising new questions about the future of professional journalism. Although automated systems can improve the speed and efficiency of producing routine news, their use may also raise concerns about accuracy, human oversight, editorial accountability, professional autonomy, and job security. These concerns become particularly important when automated content is produced or disseminated without adequate human verification and editorial control.

In Nigeria, journalists are increasingly encountering AI-driven technologies in newsroom activities, although their adoption remains uneven because of limitations in training, infrastructure, resources, and institutional preparedness (Gbaden et al., 2024). Existing studies have also identified concerns about the implications of automation for employment and professional relevance. For example, Onwe et al. (2024) found that registered journalists in Enugu State perceived automated journalism as a potential threat to job security. However, evidence from other Nigerian media environments cannot necessarily be generalised to journalists in Ebonyi State, where the technological and organisational conditions of journalism practice may differ.

The central problem, therefore, is the limited empirical evidence on how registered journalists in Ebonyi State perceive the professional and ethical risks associated with automated reporting. Existing studies have focused largely on Lagos, Kwara, Enugu, and other media environments, leaving limited evidence from less-studied state-level contexts. Consequently, it remains unclear whether journalists in Ebonyi State share similar concerns about job security, accuracy, editorial control, ethical accountability, algorithmic bias, and professional relevance. There is also limited

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evidence regarding their awareness of these potential risks, particularly given that automated reporting is a specific application of AI rather than a synonym for all forms of AI use in journalism.

This gap has practical implications for journalists, media organisations, and professional bodies. Without context-specific evidence, it may be difficult to develop appropriate training programmes, professional safeguards, and newsroom policies for the responsible use of automated reporting. The study therefore examines registered journalists' perceptions of the professional and ethical risks associated with automated reporting in Ebonyi State, with a view to generating empirical evidence that can inform professional preparedness and the responsible integration of automation into journalism practice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of the potential professional and ethical risks associated with AI-driven automated reporting among registered journalists in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the perceived implications of the professional and ethical risks associated with AI-driven automated reporting for journalism practice among registered journalists in Ebonyi State?
3. What strategies can be adopted to mitigate the professional and ethical risks associated with AI-driven automated reporting in journalism practice in Ebonyi State?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Awareness, Implications and Mitigation of Automated Reporting Risks in Journalism

Automated reporting is a specific application of artificial intelligence in which algorithms or AI systems process information and generate news content with limited human intervention. While it can improve the speed and efficiency of news production, it also raises concerns about accuracy, misinformation, algorithmic bias, accountability, transparency, professional autonomy, and employment. Research on AI in journalism provides relevant contextual evidence for understanding these concerns. Adjin-Tettey et al. (2024) found that journalists in Ghana and South Africa used AI for activities including research, transcription, story development, and fact-checking, while expressing concerns about misinformation, attribution, and intellectual property. Similarly, Gbaden et al. (2024) identified data quality, algorithmic bias, transparency, and accountability as important challenges to AI adoption in Nigerian journalism.

Evidence from Nigeria further indicates growing awareness of AI among journalists, although practical understanding varies. Bello et al. (2023) reported high awareness of AI journalism among journalists in Lagos and Kwara States, alongside concerns about its professional and ethical implications. Ismail et al. (2024) found varying levels of AI awareness among journalists in Kwara State and emphasised continuous training, while Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2024) reported considerable awareness of AI tools among journalists in Owerri but limited practical knowledge. These studies provide useful contextual evidence but do not specifically establish journalists' awareness of the risks associated with automated reporting. This distinction is

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important because the risks of machine-generated news may differ from those arising when AI is used merely as an assistive newsroom tool.

The potential implications of automated reporting extend to core values and practices of journalism. Automated systems may reproduce errors or biases in their underlying data, generate misleading information, or produce content without adequate contextual understanding. Such problems may affect the accuracy and credibility of news and complicate editorial accountability by making responsibility for errors less clear. Algorithmic bias may also influence the selection, framing, and representation of news, particularly where systems depend on incomplete or biased datasets. Adjin-Tettey et al. (2024) identified misinformation and attribution as concerns surrounding AI use, while Gbaden et al. (2024) highlighted data quality and accountability challenges. These concerns are particularly significant in automated reporting because rapid content generation may reduce opportunities for conventional editorial verification when appropriate safeguards are absent.

Automation may also influence professional autonomy, employment, and the role of human judgement. Bello et al. (2023) found that Nigerian journalists recognised the benefits of AI while expressing concerns about its implications for conventional journalism practice. Although this evidence concerns AI journalism broadly, it is relevant to understanding how increased automation of routine reporting tasks may affect professional roles and job security. Onwe et al. (2024) provide more specific evidence from Enugu State, reporting relatively low adoption of automated journalism but considerable concern about its possible effects on future employment and professional security. Thus, the implications of automated reporting extend beyond technological efficiency to questions of professional authority, accountability, and public trust.

The management of these risks requires both individual competence and organisational safeguards. Continuous training and AI literacy can enable journalists to evaluate automated outputs, identify errors, and understand system limitations. Ismail et al. (2024) and Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2024) emphasised training and capacity building, while Gbaden et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of ethical and organisational frameworks for AI adoption. Clear newsroom policies can establish acceptable uses of automation, verification procedures, and responsibility for automated or AI-assisted content. Human editorial oversight is equally important, particularly where professional judgement, contextual interpretation, and ethical decision-making are required. Research on automated journalism indicates that human involvement remains important in the production and post-editing of automatically generated news (Thurman et al., 2017; Thäsler-Kordonouri et al., 2024).

Verification, transparency, and disclosure further provide important safeguards. Automated outputs should be checked against credible sources before publication, while significant use of AI in news production should be appropriately disclosed. Professional organisations and media houses also need to strengthen ethical standards concerning accuracy, attribution, privacy, copyright, and accountability. Taken together, the literature suggests that responsible automated reporting requires journalists who are sufficiently equipped to recognise its risks, institutions that provide clear safeguards, and continued human responsibility for editorial decisions. However,

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evidence remains limited on how registered journalists in Ebonyi State understand these risks, perceive their implications for journalism practice, and assess appropriate mitigation strategies. This gap provides the basis for the present study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Protection Motivation Theory

This study is anchored on Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), developed by Rogers (1975) and revised by Rogers (1983). PMT explains how individuals respond to perceived threats and decide whether to adopt protective measures through two cognitive processes: threat appraisal and coping appraisal. Threat appraisal concerns the perceived seriousness and likelihood of a threat, while coping appraisal concerns the effectiveness of protective measures and the ability to implement them (Rogers, 1983). PMT is relevant to this study because automated reporting may create risks such as misinformation, algorithmic bias, reduced editorial control, accountability problems, job insecurity, and threats to professional autonomy (Adjin-Tettey et al., 2024; Gbaden et al., 2024). It therefore provides a basis for understanding how journalists recognise these risks, assess their implications, and consider appropriate responses. The first research question, which examines awareness of automated reporting risks, relates to threat recognition, while the second, concerning perceived implications for journalism practice, reflects threat appraisal through concerns about accuracy, editorial independence, professional autonomy, employment, accountability, and public trust (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024).

The third research question, which focuses on risk-mitigation strategies, relates to coping appraisal. PMT suggests that protective responses are more likely when individuals believe that available measures can reduce the threat and can be effectively implemented. In this study, such measures include AI training, fact-checking, human editorial oversight, newsroom guidelines, transparency, and ethical standards (Adjin-Tettey et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2024). Thus, PMT provides a framework for interpreting the study's focus on awareness of automated reporting risks, their implications for journalism practice, and measures for mitigating those risks.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine registered journalists' awareness of risks associated with automated reporting, their perceived implications for journalism practice, and strategies for mitigating such risks in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The population comprised 342 registered journalists drawn from the official membership register of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Ebonyi State Council, accessed on 5 May 2026. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) finite-population formula, a sample of 181 journalists was determined.

A simple random sampling technique was used. Each eligible journalist was assigned a unique identification number, from which 181 numbers were selected through a computer-generated random-number procedure without replacement. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from the research questions and relevant literature. The instrument consisted of four sections: demographic characteristics and six items each measuring awareness

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of automated reporting risks, perceived implications for journalism practice, and mitigation strategies.

The instrument was validated by three experts, comprising two Mass Communication specialists and one Measurement and Evaluation specialist. A pilot test involving 20 registered journalists in Enugu State yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.84 for awareness, 0.88 for perceived implications, and 0.85 for mitigation strategies, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data were collected between May and August 2026 with the assistance of trained research assistants. Of the 181 questionnaires administered, 174 were validly completed and returned, representing a 96.1% response rate; seven were excluded because they were either not returned or incomplete.

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Permission was obtained from the NUJ Ebonyi State Council, respondents were informed of the study's purpose, participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality of respondents' information was also maintained. Data from the 174 valid responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 27. Research Question One was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while Research Questions Two and Three were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS

Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale. For the awareness items, the response categories were interpreted as follows:

- 4.21–5.00 = Very High Awareness (VHA)
- 3.41–4.20 = High Awareness (HA)
- 2.61–3.40 = Moderate Awareness (MA)
- 1.81–2.60 = Low Awareness (LA)
- 1.00–1.80 = No Awareness (NA)

For items measuring respondents' level of agreement with statements on the implications and mitigation strategies, the following interpretation was used:

- 4.21–5.00 = Strongly Agree (SA)
- 3.41–4.20 = Agree (A)
- 2.61–3.40 = Undecided (U)
- 1.81–2.60 = Disagree (D)
- 1.00–1.80 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

The scale was derived from the five-point Likert response options, with a theoretical midpoint of:

5+4+3+2+1=3.00

Frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5}=3.00

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Thus, the criterion mean of 3.00 represents the midpoint of the scale, the study interprets the results using the specific ranges above. The mean scores are interpreted according to the appropriate descriptive categories for each table.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 174)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	109	62.6
	Female	65	37.4
	Total	**174**	**100.0**
Age (Years)	20–30	27	15.5
	31–40	69	39.7
	41–50	52	29.9
	51 years and above	26	14.9
	Total	**174**	**100.0**
Educational Qualification	OND/NCE	10	5.7
	HND/Bachelor's Degree	102	58.6
	Master's Degree	48	27.6
	Ph.D.	14	8.0
	Total	**174**	**100.0**
Years of Professional Experience	Less than 5 years	24	13.8
	5–10 years	58	33.3
	11–20 years	71	40.8
	Above 20 years	21	12.1
	Total	**174**	**100.0**
Professional Sector	Print Media	31	17.8
	Broadcast Media	89	51.1
	Online Media	27	15.5
	Government Information/Public Relations	27	15.5
	Total	**174**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The demographic distribution indicates that the study drew respondents with varied ages, educational backgrounds, professional experience, and areas of practice. The relatively high proportion of respondents with 11–20 years of experience and post-secondary qualifications provides a diverse professional base for examining journalists' perceptions of the risks associated with automated reporting. The distribution shows that the respondents had varied demographic and professional characteristics, providing a broad professional base for examining perceptions of automated reporting risks.

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Table 2: Awareness of Professional and Ethical Risks Associated with Automated Reporting

S/N	Potential Risk	VHA (5)	HA (4)	MA (3)	LA (2)	NA (1)	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Inaccurate or fabricated information in news reports	50	78	29	10	7	3.89	1.02	High
2	Algorithmic/programming bias in news selection and presentation	77	61	30	5	1	4.20	0.86	High
3	Reduced human editorial judgement and professional oversight	42	90	26	11	5	3.87	0.95	High
4	Reproduction of misinformation or misleading information	72	80	19	1	2	4.26	0.77	Very High
5	Threat to journalists' employment and job security	41	69	40	20	4	3.71	1.03	High
6	Ethical and accountability problems arising from errors	58	102	5	3	6	4.17	0.85	High
Grand Mean							**4.02**		**High**

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The finding implies that registered journalists in Ebonyi State are generally aware of the major risks associated with automated reporting, particularly misinformation, algorithmic bias, and ethical problems. This level of awareness suggests that journalists recognise the need for caution when using automated systems in news production. However, the comparatively lower awareness of employment and job-security risks indicates the need for continued professional education that addresses both the editorial and career-related implications of automation.

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Table 3: Perceived Implications of Automated Reporting Professional and Ethical Risks for Journalism Practice

S/N	Perceived Implication	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Reduced accuracy and credibility of news when automated information is not verified	77	84	10	3	0	4.35	0.67	Strongly Agree
2	Weakened professional judgement in news selection and story development	43	79	34	11	7	3.80	1.01	Agree
3	Unfair or inadequate representation resulting from algorithmic bias	51	88	22	8	5	3.99	0.93	Agree
4	Reduced demand for some conventional journalistic roles	59	93	12	8	2	4.14	0.82	Agree
5	Difficulty determining responsibility for inaccurate or harmful content	65	70	18	13	8	3.98	1.09	Agree
6	Possible undermining of public trust in journalism	72	88	7	5	2	4.28	0.77	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean							**4.09**		**Agree**

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The finding implies that journalists perceive automated reporting as having important implications for the accuracy, credibility, public trust, professional judgement, and employment structure of journalism. The strong concern about accuracy and public trust particularly suggests that inadequate verification of automated content could affect the credibility of news organisations. This highlights the importance of maintaining human judgement and verification alongside the use of automated reporting technologies.

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Table 4: Strategies for Mitigating the Professional and Ethical Risks of Automated Reporting

S/N	Mitigation Strategy	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Independent verification of automated information before publication	106	60	8	0	0	4.56	0.58	Strongly Agree
2	Clear organisational guidelines for using automated reporting technologies	55	97	14	5	3	4.13	0.81	Agree
3	Regular training on capabilities, limitations, and ethical use	78	71	14	7	4	4.22	0.92	Strongly Agree
4	Human editorial oversight at critical stages of automated news production	64	90	11	4	5	4.17	0.87	Agree
5	Accountability procedures for correcting automated reporting errors	65	81	17	6	5	4.12	0.93	Agree
6	Professional ethical standards for automated reporting	45	89	28	9	3	3.94	0.88	Agree
Grand Mean							**4.19**		**Agree**

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The finding implies that journalists strongly support practical measures for reducing the risks associated with automated reporting. The high support for independent verification, professional training, editorial guidelines, and human oversight indicates that responsible use of automated reporting requires continued human involvement. These measures can help media organisations improve the accuracy, accountability, and ethical quality of automated news production.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that registered journalists in Ebonyi State have a high level of awareness of the potential risks associated with automated reporting. Awareness was particularly strong regarding misinformation, algorithmic bias, and ethical and accountability concerns, while employment and job-security risks attracted comparatively less concern. This finding is consistent with Adjin-Tettey et al. (2024), who reported concerns about misinformation, attribution, and other ethical issues associated with AI use among journalists in Ghana and South Africa. It also agrees with Gbaden et al. (2024), who identified data quality, algorithmic bias, transparency, and accountability as important challenges in the use of AI in Nigerian journalism. Bello et al. (2023), Ismail et al. (2024), and Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2024) similarly reported

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growing awareness of AI among journalists alongside concerns about its implications for professional practice. From the perspective of Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), the finding suggests that journalists recognise automated reporting as a potential professional threat, providing the basis for subsequent appraisal of its consequences.

The study further found that journalists perceive automated reporting as having significant implications for journalism practice. The major concerns centred on inadequate verification, possible loss of news accuracy and credibility, declining public trust, and reduced demand for some conventional journalistic roles. These findings reinforce the concerns identified in previous research on AI in journalism. Adjin-Tettey et al. (2024) and Gbaden et al. (2024) emphasised the risks of misinformation, data quality problems, accountability, and ethical challenges, while Bello et al. (2023) found that Nigerian journalists recognised both the benefits of AI and its potential threats to conventional journalism practice. The present finding therefore suggests that journalists' concerns extend beyond the technology itself to its possible effect on the core values of journalism, particularly accuracy, credibility, professional responsibility, and public trust. In PMT terms, respondents appear to perceive automated reporting as a threat when its use may weaken established safeguards in news production.

The findings on mitigation strategies show strong support for measures aimed at reducing these risks. Respondents particularly emphasised independent verification of automated content, continuous training, human editorial oversight, organisational guidelines, and clear accountability procedures. This finding agrees with Ismail et al. (2024) and Nkwam-Uwaoma et al. (2024), who stressed the importance of training and professional capacity building, and with Gbaden et al. (2024), who highlighted the need for appropriate ethical and organisational frameworks for AI use in journalism. It also reflects the position that AI-related technologies are more appropriately treated as tools that require human supervision rather than replacements for professional journalistic judgement. Within PMT, these responses represent coping strategies through which journalists seek to reduce the perceived risks of automated reporting. The strong emphasis on verification and editorial oversight is particularly significant because it indicates that human intervention remains central to maintaining the quality and credibility of automated news content.

Taken together, the findings reveal a consistent pattern of awareness of risks, recognition of professional implications, and support for protective measures**.** This corresponds with the threat-appraisal and coping dimensions of PMT. The findings do not necessarily suggest that journalists reject automated reporting; rather, they indicate support for its responsible use under conditions of human verification, editorial judgement, professional training, ethical guidance, and institutional accountability. Thus, the successful integration of automated reporting into journalism may depend not on resisting the technology but on establishing safeguards that protect the fundamental values and responsibilities of the profession.

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results, the study concludes that automated reporting is not inherently incompatible with professional journalism; rather, its risks become significant when technological efficiency is allowed to override human judgement, verification and accountability. The findings indicate that responsible adoption therefore depends on maintaining meaningful human oversight and professional safeguards. The study consequently concludes that automated reporting should function as a support mechanism for journalists, not as a substitute for editorial judgement and ethical responsibility, particularly where accuracy, credibility and public trust are at stake.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Media organisations should require human verification of automated news outputs before publication, particularly to minimise misinformation, inaccuracies and threats to public trust.
2. Media organisations and journalism training bodies should provide regular training on automated reporting, with emphasis on algorithmic bias, system limitations, verification and ethical editorial judgement.
3. Media organisations and professional journalism bodies should establish clear guidelines for automated reporting, specifying acceptable uses, human oversight, accountability for errors, and procedures for correcting inaccurate automated content.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes empirical evidence on registered journalists' perceptions of the professional and ethical risks of automated reporting in Ebonyi State. It demonstrates the importance of human verification, professional training and institutional safeguards in ensuring that automated reporting supports, rather than undermines, accuracy, accountability and public trust in journalism.

Ethical Clearance

Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate authority before data collection. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and the data were used solely for academic purposes.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

Ngozi Ruth Alo conceived the study and developed the research design; Chidiebere, Adaolisa Ucha, collected the data; Blessing Ewa-Ibe conducted the data analysis and interpretation; Ngozi Ruth Alo and Mercy Nnedimma Nwalieke prepared the initial manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure
The author(s) declare that AI-assisted technology
(Google Scholar) was used in reference checking, while writing this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement
The datasets on which the conclusions of this study were based are available upon reasonable request.

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