



The Media Ethical Risks of AI-Generated Political Deepfake Videos: A Conceptual Analysis Using the 2024 Indian General Election as a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

With the iterative updates of artificial intelligence technology, deepfake videos have become an ethical issue that cannot be ignored in the field of digital communication. With the help of artificial intelligence, facial features and voice effects can be manipulated, making false statements appear as if they are real events. In the field of political communication, such technologies may mislead the public, damage personal reputation, and weaken public trust in media information. During the 2024 Indian general election, there were cases involving fake videos featuring actors Aamir Khan and Ranveer Singh. Researchers used qualitative case analysis methods, combining authenticity criteria, information disorder framework, and the responsibilities of digital platforms, to explore the ethical risks posed by AI-enabled political content. The study will focus on the damage to information authenticity caused by such fake videos, as well as the improper appropriation of public figures' public image and political stance. The hidden dangers brought by deepfake technology are influenced by the characteristics of the technology itself and are closely related to the behavior of content creators, social media operators, and the general public.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, deepfake videos, information disorder, media ethics, political communication

1. Introduction

Various social media platforms are increasingly becoming the primary channels for the public to access information and stay informed about political developments. During election campaigns, political figures, political parties, and ordinary online users utilize these platforms to disseminate various politically related content. While online channels possess the ability to rapidly spread information, unverified content can also reach a vast audience in an extremely short period.

The continuous development of artificial intelligence has genuinely reshaped the current digital communication environment. Leveraging deepfake technology derived from AI, it is possible to generate or modify visual and audio content, creating the illusion that individuals are uttering words they have never spoken. While such technologies can be applied in entertainment and creative fields, their misuse in fabricating false political statements could lead to public misunderstanding.

In their 2019 study, Chesney and Citron noted that deep synthesis technology could pose threats to personal privacy, democratic systems, and national security. This indicates that deepfakes are not merely a technical issue but also involve concerns about content authenticity, individual rights, and social public responsibility.

During the 2024 Indian general elections, false videos circulating on social media implicated actors Aamir Khan and Ranveer Singh. These manipulated clips were designed to create the misleading impression that the two actors had made negative remarks about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and subsequently endorsed the opposition Indian National Congress party. A 2024 report by Reuters noted that such edited videos sparked concerns about the potential for AI to disrupt the information environment surrounding elections. According to a fact-check by Agence France-Presse (AFP, 2024), the videos had been altered by pairing authentic interview footage with fabricated audio, resulting in a deceptive presentation.

In light of this, it is necessary to systematically examine the media ethics-related issues in this real-world case, and then explore how content creators, social media platforms, and the general public can jointly assume their respective responsibilities. This section will focus on discussing the ethical risks present, without asserting that these videos have already influenced the election outcome.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Deepfakes and Information Authenticity

Through artificial intelligence technology, images, videos, and audio content are generated and modified to make them appear as real events. This type of technology is commonly referred to as deepfakes. Since videos often possess strong persuasiveness, audiences may firmly believe the content within them without verifying the source of information.

In 2019, scholars Chesney and Citron proposed that such false audio-visual content generated by deep synthesis technology not only harms individuals' reputations but also gradually erodes the public's trust in authentic audio-visual evidence. As the production quality of fake videos approaches that of real ones, the public is likely to not only believe fabricated statements by political figures but also question genuine visual materials. This undoubtedly raises the threshold for verifying news information.

2.2 Information Disorder

The Information Disorder Analysis Framework proposed by Wardle and Derakhshan in 2017 can help dissect and analyze various issues such as false information, deliberate misinformation, and malicious misuse of authentic information. With this analytical framework, researchers can recognize that content deviating from accuracy standards does not necessarily imply that all information disseminators have a subjective intent to mislead deliberately.

In this case, the disclosed fact-checking materials support that videos involving edits and misrepresentations of individuals' political stances indeed have such issues. However, we cannot definitively identify the original creators or their intentions based solely on these materials. Therefore, this article primarily analyzes the misleading nature of the videos and does not judge the unverified responsibilities behind them.

2.3 Digital Platform Responsibility

Various social media platforms, relying on content screening mechanisms, content recommendation algorithms, and user feedback, directly influence the dissemination of information. A 2023 study by UNESCO indicates that the management of digital platforms must simultaneously consider freedom of expression, the protection of fundamental rights, and the health of the information environment. Relevant digital platforms should properly handle misleading content while avoiding undue restrictions on political discourse that complies with regulations.

3. Theoretical Framework

This analysis will proceed from three dimensions: adherence to standards in real-world content, research frameworks with chaotic information, and the responsibilities that digital platforms should bear.

The authenticity guidelines in the field of communication require that all types of information accurately reflect facts as much as possible and must not mislead the audience's judgment about a person's true statements through means such as editing or synthesis. People have the freedom to publicly evaluate official departments or support a certain political group, but disguising fabricated false statements as genuine remarks raises various moral issues.

To complement this, the information disorder framework can be used to analyze the attributes, dissemination pathways, and potential harms of false information. Relevant researchers must clearly identify whether the content in question contains errors, whether the entities spreading the content are aware of its falsity, and anticipate the various impacts it may trigger. It is crucial not to conflate these dimensions of the issue.

Ultimately, the responsibilities of various online data platforms require them to establish clear and appropriate content management systems. These platforms can utilize content labeling, fact-checking reminders, and complaint/report channels to curb the spread of false information while safeguarding users' legitimate rights to expression.

4. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case analysis research method, which does not rely on questionnaires or interviews but instead involves an in-depth examination of publicly available news reports, fact-checking materials, and relevant academic literature.

The relevant reference materials include corresponding reports released by Reuters on April 22, 2024, fact-checking content provided by AFP on April 29, 2024, as well as various studies on deepfake technology, information disorder phenomena, and digital platform governance models. The related work will first organize specific event facts that can be supported by public information, then analyze the ethical dimensions involved based on authenticity criteria and frameworks related to information disorder, and finally explore optimization paths and feasible measures that digital platforms and content producers can adopt.

As the research relies on publicly available materials, it is impossible to identify the original creators of all videos or directly assess whether viewers believe in them. Therefore, by reviewing publicly accessible cases and combining relevant guidelines and analytical frameworks to explore ethical-related issues, and subsequently discussing optimization paths for both parties, constitutes the core focus of this analysis.

5. Case Analysis

5.1 Case Background

During a critical phase of the 2024 Indian general elections, false videos involving Aamir Khan and Ranveer Singh appeared on social media platforms. These fabricated clips, circulating on social media during the 2024 Indian elections, show the two well-known actors commenting on Modi and appealing to the public to support the Congress Party.

According to a report released by Reuters in 2024, such videos have spread online, raising public concerns that artificial intelligence might disrupt the information environment related to elections. A fact-check conducted by AFP (2024) revealed that these videos used existing interview footage and added false audio content, incorrectly presenting the political stance of the actors involved. This case demonstrates that deepfake technology does not need to completely recreate a new persona. For example, making slight changes to the sound effects or contextual cues in real footage might lead viewers to mistakenly believe that someone has said something they never actually said.

5.2 Ethical Issue 1: *Compromising Information Authenticity*

The primary ethical controversy involved in this case lies in the damage caused to information authenticity by the forged video. Audiences often regard visual footage and voiceovers as references for discerning the truth of events. Therefore, when a video presents itself as a genuine interview, the audience is likely to find it more convincing.

However, relevant videos link the images of performers with political tendencies they have not actually expressed, making it difficult for viewers to distinguish between genuine statements and altered content. This is precisely the deepfake risk discussed by Chesney and Citron in 2019: as synthetic content becomes increasingly realistic, public trust in audiovisual evidence may be compromised.

From the perspective of media ethics, content producers must not only focus on whether videos can capture viewers' attention but also consider the accuracy of the content, whether it may mislead the audience, and whether the original context of the content is preserved. If someone alters the intended message by adjusting the audio or visuals in a video, even if some segments are based on real interviews, it may lead the audience to make incorrect judgments.

Additionally, once false information spreads, the audience may not be able to obtain corrections in a timely manner. Even if fact-checking is subsequently conducted, it does not mean that all viewers of the original video will receive the corrections. In such situations, creators of original content need to assume relevant responsibility for the accuracy of the information, while content platforms must also establish correction mechanisms for errors and inaccuracies that align with actual circumstances.

5.3 Ethical Issue Two: *Misuse of Public Figures and Political Stances*

The second ethical issue that requires attention is the public image of public figures and how their identities are being exploited to convey political messages that are not genuinely expressed by them.

The words and actions of well-known figures often attract public attention, but this does not mean that anyone can arbitrarily use their appearance and voice to fabricate false statements about political support. In this case, the likenesses of two artists were used to create the impression that they support a certain political group. This approach may lead viewers to misunderstand the political inclinations of these two artists and could also have a negative impact on their personal reputations.

Such operations can transform the attention of public figures into misleading political influence. Those who are unaware of the original interviews may trust these videos and use them as a reference for evaluating relevant political parties or issues. Therefore, fabricated videos not only affect those being imitated but may also interfere with the public's process of forming their own judgments on political matters.

From an ethical perspective, the use of various character portrayals must align with the principle of authenticity while also fully safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of relevant parties. Content creators need to clearly delineate the boundaries between genuine statements, fictional creations, and AI-generated content, ensuring that audiences do not mistakenly equate the portrayal of characters with their actual expressed views.

At the same time, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between errors in the information itself and the subjective intentions of the disseminators. Some individuals who forward related content may not be aware that the authenticity of the videos they share is questionable; therefore, it would be unfair to generalize that all forwarders intend to mislead the public. This discussion focuses on the ethical issues at the level of false information presentation, rather than making accusations against specific political parties or individuals without sufficient evidence.

5.4 Responsibility of Social Media Platforms

In addition to content creators, social media platforms also need to bear some responsibility. The platform's content moderation, recommendation mechanisms, and error correction processes can influence the spread of false videos. If the platform fails to promptly address content that has been confirmed as misleading, the audience may continue to be exposed to incorrect information.

In 2023, UNESCO explicitly stated that in managing digital platforms, it is necessary to consider the protection of human rights and the importance of freedom of expression. Therefore, platforms should not simply delete content solely because it involves politically controversial issues, nor should they completely ignore content that is clearly likely to mislead the public.

It would be more appropriate to take countermeasures based on the attributes and potential risks of the content. For example, adding clear labeling guidelines for relevant adjusted content, opening a feedback channel for users, and providing clear explanations of the handling results. Relevant platforms can also collaborate with credible fact-checking organizations to enhance their ability to identify AI-generated content.

6. Discussion

This example demonstrates that artificial intelligence itself cannot fully explain various issues related to media ethics. The application scenarios of this technology span learning, leisure, and creative fields, while also carrying the risk of being used to generate false political information. What truly needs focus is the practical application direction of the technology, as well as whether relevant practitioners have genuinely fulfilled their responsibilities.

If all responsibility is shifted entirely onto artificial intelligence, the roles of content creators and dissemination platforms will be overlooked. Moreover, relying solely on users to discern the authenticity of information is clearly inappropriate, as the general public generally lacks the professional expertise to identify deepfake content.

Therefore, I believe that deepfake governance requires the participation of multiple parties. Creators should ensure that their content is not mistaken for genuine speech; platforms should improve their review and error-correction mechanisms; fact-checking organizations should provide reliable information; and the public should enhance their awareness of verifying online content.

At the same time, governance measures must also take into account freedom of expression. Various discussions on politics and even expressions of different viewpoints in the public sphere are entirely reasonable. Relevant platforms should make proper distinctions, clearly identifying which are compliant political remarks and which are false information disguised as genuine voices, and handle them in a transparent and appropriate manner.

It is important to note that while current news reports can support the conclusion that such videos have been altered, they do not prove to what extent these alterations have influenced voters' choices. Based on this, the research institute focuses on potential ethical risks rather than unverified election-related impacts.

7. Suggestions

Producers of videos must clearly label content that is generated or adjusted by artificial intelligence, especially when it involves real people and politically related viewpoints. These labels should be easily noticeable to viewers and must remain intact even when the content is shared or disseminated.

Specifically, all social media platforms should disclose to the public the core principles for handling AI-generated false content, covering the complete process of content labeling, dissemination control, information removal, and objection appeals. Platforms must promptly address relevant content that has been verified as misleading, while also preventing improper interference with compliant expressions of political stance.

Third, various educational institutions and universities need to strengthen guidance and teaching on media literacy, helping students master methods for locating original videos, verifying information sources, and comparing different media reports. Before posting content related to important political matters, it is advisable to first confirm the authenticity of the content.

Finally, governments, media, platforms, and fact-checking organizations need to work together to optimize the ecological environment in the digital information sector. The core of regulation is not to eliminate all AI-generated content but to reduce the possibility of technology being used to mislead the public.

8. Conclusion

This discussion selects fake videos related to Aamir Khan and Ranveer Singh during the 2024 Indian general election as examples to analyze the media ethical issues raised by deepfake content in the political domain generated by artificial intelligence technology. The relevant research covers the damage to information authenticity caused by such fake videos, as well as issues concerning the improper appropriation of public figures' personal images and political stances.

Based on an analysis grounded in the principle of information authenticity, frameworks addressing information disorder, and the multidimensional responsibilities of digital platforms, relevant research concludes that AI-generated false content may mislead public perception, infringe upon the reputations of specific entities, and pose greater challenges for audiences in verifying the authenticity of political information. Content dissemination platforms must establish appropriate coordination mechanisms that balance the suppression of misinformation with the protection of the public's right to voice their opinions.

This study is limited by the scope of publicly available information, making it impossible to identify the original creators of all videos or directly investigate their actual impact on voters. Therefore, the conclusions drawn in this paper primarily focus on identifiable ethical risks.

Overall, intelligent technology has opened up new opportunities for the dissemination of political information in the digital realm. However, breakthroughs and innovations in such technologies must not come at the expense of information authenticity, individual rights and interests, or the foundation of public trust. Society can better address the ethical challenges posed by deepfakes by strengthening content traceability, fact-checking, platform accountability, and media literacy cultivation, thereby advancing more responsible political communication practices.

Data Availability Statement

The materials analysed in this study are publicly available through the sources cited in the reference list.

Ethics Statement

This study is based on publicly available news reports, fact-checking materials, and academic literature. It did not involve human or animal participants.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this manuscript.

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