Critical Analysis of AI-Generated Video Content and its Influence on Peter Obi's Social Identity Formation in Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election

[1]Emeke Precious Nwaoboli, PhD&[2]Elijah Ojete

[1 &2]Department of Mass communication, Benson Idahosa University
[1]emekenwaoboli@gmail.com
[2]eojete@biu.edu.ng

Abstract
The study investigated the influence of AI-generated deepfake videos on social identity formation during Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, specifically analyzing the deepfake video featuring Peter Obi, which falsely claimed he lifted 439 million Nigerians out of poverty. The objectives included analyzing the role of social media in disseminating deepfake content, examining narrative structures and themes in such videos and assessing their potential consequences on the integrity of the democratic process. Utilizing a qualitative case study methodology, the researchers employed thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis to explore the video's content and its impact on viewers' perceptions. Findings indicated that deepfake videos exacerbate existing ideological divides, distort political discourse and diminish voters' ability to discern truth from falsehood, ultimately undermining public trust and social cohesion. Based on the findings, it is concluded that deepfake videos pose a significant threat to democratic integrity and it is recommended that the Nigerian legislature should establish comprehensive regulations on deepfake technology, social media platforms, implement robust detection tools, political candidates prioritize transparent communication and civic organisations should enhance media literacy among voters.

Keywords: Deepfake videos, Social identity formation, Nigerian presidential election, Democratic integrity, Media literacy

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) deepfakes have significantly impacted political dynamics in both developed and underdeveloped countries. These AI-generated videos, which manipulate and alter data to create materials that are overtly false, have garnered considerable attention, especially in political contexts (Bakir & McStay, 2023; Okolie, 2023). As noted by ladoyinbo, Olabanji, Olaniyi, Adebiyi, Okunleye and Ismaila (2024), deepfakes can present substantial challenges to social identity formation and influence critical political events, including elections. The advancements in machine learning and deep learning technologies have facilitated the creation of highly convincing fake videos, which are produced by training computer models on large datasets to superimpose one person's facial expressions onto another (Trammel, 2023).

In Nigeria, where the application of AI remains nascent, the misuse of deepfake technology raises significant concerns. As Bakir and McStay (2023) observe, these videos are often exploited for malicious purposes, from misleading the public to undermining political integrity. Moreover, Abbas and Taeihagh (2024) highlight that while deepfakes are not a new concept, they have emerged as a widespread phenomenon with extensive implications for misinformation and public perception.

Research indicates that deepfake videos can distort political discourse by fabricating speeches or interviews of politicians, thus influencing public opinion and threatening democratic ideals (Adigwe, Mayeke, Olabanji, Okunleye, Joeaneke & Olaniyi, 2024). The rapid dissemination of these videos on social media platforms exacerbates their impact, as they can quickly reach vast audiences and shape voter perceptions (Okolie, 2023). The potential for such technology to polarize voters and incite social unrest poses a considerable threat to the electoral process in developing countries like Nigeria (Bakir & McStay, 2023).

Despite the risks, some scholars argue that deepfakes can also promote awareness about misinformation and encourage critical thinking regarding digital content (Whyte, 2020; Saguete et al., 2020). However, the adverse effects of deepfakes in political campaigns, particularly in the context of Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, highlight the urgent need for understanding their implications on social identity formation and democratic integrity. This, therefore, necessitated the current study.

Statement of the Problem

The proliferation of deepfakes raises pressing concerns about their role in shaping public opinion, the integrity of political communication and the evolution of social identities among the electorate. Previous studies have examined various aspects of deepfakes, including their risks and the necessity for regulatory measures (Gregory, 2023; Nnamdi et al., 2023). Moreover, research has explored gender-related issues concerning AI-generated images (Nwokeocha & Etifit, 2024) and the intersection of privacy concerns with deepfake technology (Okolie, 2023). Yet, the specific effects of AI-generated deepfake videos on social identity formation during critical political events remain underexplored in Nigeria, indicating a significant research gap.

These researchers sought to address the critical gap in existing literature by examining the intricate relationship between AI-generated deepfakes and the

formation of social identities in the context of the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to mitigate the harmful impacts of deepfakes on political discourse and public trust.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. Analyse the role of social media platforms in the amplification of deepfake content during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election.
2. Ascertain tones, narrative structures and themes of AI-generated deepfakes in shaping the formation of social identity during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election.
3. Examine the potential consequences of AI-generated deepfake videos on the integrity of the democratic process in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election.

Conceptual Review

Overview of the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election was held on February 25, 2023, with Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) emerging as the winner. Tinubu defeated runners-up Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, amidst controversy and criticism over the election process, including reports of vote buying, voter intimidation and logistic issues.

As noted by Musa and Musa (2023), the voting process was observed by tens of thousands of journalists, election monitors and security personnel, highlighting its significance and the scrutiny it received. The primary contenders for the presidency included the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), the ruling APC, the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) and the Labour Party (LP) (Mustapha, Oluwatukasi, & Ayegbusi, 2024). The PDP, APC and LP engaged in an unprecedented "triangle fight" for the support of Nigerian voters (*The Guardian*, 2022).

However, the election was not without conflict. Nwaoboli and Ajibulu (2023) reported numerous disputes surrounding the electoral process, with rival political parties calling for recounts and accusing each other of vote-buying, voter intimidation and attacks on polling stations. According to Musa and Musa (2023), Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the APC secured victory with 36.61% (8,794,726) of the total votes cast. Despite significant support, his main challengers, Peter Obi of the LP and Atiku Abubakar of the PDP, were unable to win the election.

Despite these challenges, the 2023 presidential election marked a pivotal moment for Nigeria's democracy. Following Tinubu's victory, the political landscape shifted dramatically, culminating in his inauguration as Nigeria's President on May 29th, 2023. Nwaoboli and Ajibulu (2023) noted that the new administration was expected to address critical national issues such as unity, economic growth, corruption and security—concerns that emerged during the election.

Understanding Deepfake Videos

Deepfake videos are a form of manipulated content created using advanced artificial intelligence technologies, specifically deep learning algorithms, to generate highly realistic fake images or videos. According to Yu, Xia, Fei and Lu (2021), these altered media can convincingly depict words or actions that never occurred, raising concerns about their potential to spread misinformation, manipulate public opinion and deceive viewers. A deepfake video might portray a politician engaging in unethical behaviour or making statements that could damage their reputation (Gregory, 2022).

Abbas and Taeihagh (2024) describe deepfakes as artificial intelligence (AI)-generated digital content, usually a video, audio, or image, that has been manipulated using deep learning algorithms to alter, replace, or superimpose the original content with new content that appears to be authentic. As deepfake algorithms become increasingly sophisticated, detecting these videos becomes more challenging (Whyte, 2020). This is why Battista (2024) warns that deepfake technology can be highly detrimental, as it is accessible to anyone and can be used to tarnish an individual's reputation for political or personal reasons.

Various detection techniques have been developed for identifying deepfake videos, including multimodal analysis, forensic analysis and deep learning algorithms. Deep learning systems utilize convolutional neural networks to analyse visual input and identify anomalies in deepfake videos. Multimodal analysis combines auditory and visual data to detect discrepancies in speech and lip movements. Despite these advancements, the continual evolution of deepfake technology necessitates ongoing research and the development of improved detection systems (Filibeli, 2019).

Deepfake videos significantly influence entertainment, politics, media and even individuals' personal lives. Politicians can employ these videos to discredit opponents, shape public opinion and disseminate false information (Vizoso, Vaz-

Álvarez & López-García, 2021). As noted by Gambín, Yazidi, Vasilakos, Haugerud and Djenouri (2024), advances in deep learning, big data and image processing have facilitated the spread of online misinformation through deepfakes, presenting serious risks such as manipulation of public opinion, geopolitical tensions, market disruptions, fraud, defamation and identity theft. Furthermore, deepfakes can be utilized to fabricate false narratives about politicians during elections, thereby influencing voting outcomes.

Social Identity Formation

Social identity formation is a process that involves the internalisation of group norms, values and beliefs. According to Thomas, McGarty and Mavor (2016), social identity formation is the process by which individuals develop a sense of shared identity with others, which is grounded in a shared sense of purpose, values and norms. This process is influenced by various factors, including group interaction, social context and intergroup relations. As individuals interact with others who share similar characteristics, values and beliefs, they begin to develop a sense of belonging and connection to the group.

The formation of social identity has significant implications for individual behaviour, attitudes and perceptions. When individuals identify with a particular group, they are more likely to adopt the group's norms, values and beliefs and to engage in behaviours that are consistent with the group's identity (Lee & Gretze, 2014). Furthermore, social identity formation can also influence intergroup relations, as individuals who identify strongly with their ingroup may develop negative attitudes and behaviours towards outgroups (Lee & Gretze, 2014). Therefore, understanding the process of social identity formation is crucial for promoting positive intergroup relations and reducing social conflict.

Literature Review

Impact of Deepfake Videos on Political Trust, Social Identity Formation and Democratic Processes

Deepfake videos are emerging as a significant political challenge, contributing to the erosion of public trust and the integrity of democratic processes. Dunard (2020, p. 5) notes that "the intersection of deepfakes and politics raises serious concerns regarding the potential for widespread misinformation, the gradual erosion of truth and the manipulation of information." The influence of deepfake videos on political discourse can be profound; they can debunk political narratives and disseminate false information. For instance, a deepfake video could falsely portray a politician engaging in unethical behaviour or accepting bribes, thereby

damaging their reputation and influencing public perception. The proliferation of such manipulated content can distort public opinion, undermine political campaigns and jeopardize the impartiality of elections. As Dunard (2020) highlights, the widespread distribution of deepfake videos compromises the accuracy and reliability of political information. Consequently, the public's trust in media organisations, particularly reputable news outlets, may diminish as distinguishing between authentic news and deepfakes becomes increasingly challenging.

Fraga-Lamas and Fernandez-Carames (2020, p. 57) state that "deepfakes can erode public confidence in political parties, media outlets and elected officials by fostering an environment of ambiguity and suspicion." Similarly, Gregory (2022, p. 702) observes that "political adversaries may exploit deepfakes to incite unrest, manipulate public opinion and undermine democratic processes." An informed and engaged electorate is essential for making sound judgments and the potential misuse of deepfake technology poses a considerable threat to this ideal.

The historical context of deepfakes and political events is noteworthy; apprehensions about their potential use to sway public opinion and influence election outcomes were prevalent during the 2020 U.S. presidential election (Appel & Prietzel, 2022). The presence of deepfakes continues to be a pressing concern for future elections. Abbas and Taeihagh (2024, p. 2) assert that "deepfakes can create political and religious tensions between countries, deceive the public and impact election results." Given the advancements in technology aimed at detecting and validating deepfake political content, there may be a need for legal frameworks to prohibit their creation and distribution.

Misinformation, Deepfakes and Disinformation

Deepfakes, misinformation and disinformation represent complex phenomena that significantly influence public opinion and societal dynamics. Fraga-Lamas and Fernandez-Carames (2020) explain that "deepfakes" involve the manipulation or creation of fake audio, video, or image data through artificial intelligence. Gregory (2022) defines misinformation as the unintentional dissemination of incorrect or misleading information, while Whyte (2020) characterizes disinformation as intentionally misleading information. These practices include generating and distributing misleading content, fake news and divisive narratives on social media, aiming to incite division and undermine trust in democratic institutions. A notable example is a 2018 deepfake video that falsely depicted former U.S. President Barack Obama delivering a speech he never made

(Langmia, 2023). The release of this video raised widespread concerns about the potential for malicious actors to exploit technology for disinformation and to skew public opinion.

Misinformation, disinformation and deepfakes interact within the digital landscape through various media channels (Fraga-Lamas & Fernandez-Carames, 2020). Social media plays a crucial role in the rapid dissemination of misinformation. Dunard (2020) suggests that algorithms prioritizing viral content and user engagement often fail to distinguish between credible and unreliable sources. As a result, misinformation spreads quickly, outpacing efforts to fact-check and correct false narratives. This rapid dissemination exacerbates the challenges of combating misinformation in the digital age.

More so, educational programmes designed to enhance individuals' abilities to assess sources, verify claims and detect fraudulent content can foster a more informed public (Langmia, 2023). Promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills equips individuals to discern between truthful and misleading information (Filibeli, 2019).

Voters' Vulnerability to Deceptive Deepfake Videos

Voters' vulnerability to deceptive deepfake videos is a growing concern, especially during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Research has shown that deepfake videos can be just as deceptive as other forms of fake news, with over 40% of participants in a study believing in scandals created by deepfakes (Appel & Prietzel, 2022). Deepfake videos had a substantial impact on the 2020 U.S. presidential election. While such videos are not commonplace in determining election outcomes, their pervasive presence fosters distrust and disseminates misinformation. Deepfake videos that disparaged public figures, including a notable instance involving House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi in 2019 (Appel & Prietzel, 2022), contributed to political polarisation in an already divided nation.

Deepfake videos have also been weaponized in Nigerian politics to manipulate public perception and incite violence. For example, a fabricated video purportedly showing Muhammadu Buhari, a 2015 presidential candidate, promoting violence circulated widely (Nnamdi, Oniyinde, & Abegunde, 2022). This instance illustrates the multifaceted potential of deepfake videos to effectuate mass influence and alter political narratives. More so, during the 2019 Kano State governorship election, videos depicting Governor Abdullahi Ganduje allegedly accepting bribes led to widespread public outrage as some people believed the

video was a deepfake. This incident underscored the challenges democratic institutions face in verifying the authenticity of such content and the potential impact of deepfakes on public opinion.

The prevalence of social media platforms such as Facebook, X, TikTok and WhatsApp in Nigeria further complicates the situation. A lack of media literacy and critical thinking skills among the populace contributes to the uncritical acceptance of deepfake videos, demonstrating the urgent need for educational initiatives aimed at helping individuals identify and assess these manipulated media. A coordinated approach involving digital firms and Nigerian government agencies could lead to the development of advanced detection algorithms capable of identifying deepfake videos and alerting users. Furthermore, strengthening legal frameworks to hold individuals accountable for creating and distributing harmful deepfakes could serve as a deterrent, providing recourse for affected parties, including institutions and organisations (Oladoyinbo et al., 2014).

Incorporating media literacy education into the curriculum is essential for equipping Nigerians to evaluate media content, including deepfakes (Nnamdi, Oniyinde & Abegunde, 2023). Collaboration among academic institutions, government agencies and civil society organisations is crucial to ensure the effective implementation of media literacy programmes.

Theoretical Framwork: Social Identity Theory

Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory, developed in the 1970s (Devine, 2015), posits that individuals are more likely to internalize and reinforce their social identities when confronted with appealing narratives or distorted facts that align with their existing identities. This theory elucidates how exposure to AI-generated deepfakes can reshape individuals' political beliefs, as well as their affiliations with racial, religious and geographic groups (Huddy, 2001). It further provides valuable insights into the dynamics of intergroup behaviour and identity formation, highlighting how individuals construct a sense of self and belonging through group membership.

Deepfake videos can disseminate harmful or misleading information intended to influence public opinion and reinforce stereotypes about specific social identity groups (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018). Moreover, social identity theory emphasizes the importance of positive differentiation and intergroup comparisons (Devine, 2015). Individuals who perceive their social identity group as threatened or competing are more inclined to engage in behaviours that strengthen ingroup

identification and differentiate themselves from outgroups. AI-generated deepfakes may specifically target political parties or candidates during electoral contests, such as the 2019 Nigerian presidential election.

The theory also underscores the significance of social movements and group activities (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018). If deepfake videos are perceived as threats to the electoral process or the rights of particular social identity groups, they may catalyse increased political engagement, mobilisation, or solidarity among these groups. Large-scale protests advocating for the rights and identities of marginalized communities, as well as grassroots initiatives and social media campaigns, can serve as counter measures against the harmful effects of deepfakes. Deepfake videos that gain traction during elections may exacerbate conflict and polarisation by encouraging individuals to engage in ingroup-outgroup dynamics and defend their group identities (Kalin & Sambanis, 2018).

Social identity is formed within the context of political campaigns, influenced by more than just individual characteristics. Social media, celebrity endorsements and media narratives can significantly affect an individual's political behaviour and sense of identity. The manner in which media covers and frames political events can shape public perceptions of the political landscape and the issues that resonate within their social networks. Social identities developed within political contexts can substantially influence democratic engagement (Vizoso et al., 2021). While they may exacerbate social inequality and alienate marginalized communities, they also have the potential to strengthen social bonds, encourage political participation and promote collaborative efforts.

Methodology

The researchers utilized a qualitative research methodology, specifically adopting a case study design. This case study approach was selected for its capacity to provide nuanced insights into a particular phenomenon, focusing on the deepfake video of Peter Obi (https://web.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=Nif5oz&v=1156588275263995), which gained significant traction on social media throughout the election period. The sample size was not predetermined, as the study was centered around this specific case; rather, it comprised the widely circulated deepfake video of Obi. To select this case study, the researchers employed a purposive sampling technique, ensuring that the chosen video exemplified the ways in which AI-generated deepfakes can manipulate public opinion in electoral contexts.

The research design for this investigation was firmly rooted in qualitative case study methodology, allowing for a thorough examination of the deepfake video and its implications for social identity formation during the election. For data analysis, the researchers conducted a qualitative content analysis of the video, employing a thematic analysis approach. This involved identifying and coding various themes, patterns and meanings present within the data. The analysis was framed within a critical discourse analysis perspective, which scrutinized the language, tone and narrative structure of the video. This framework facilitated an understanding of the underlying power dynamics and ideological assumptions embedded in the content, offering deeper insights into the impact of the deepfake on viewers' perceptions and social identities.

Data Presentation

Overview of the Case Study

The 0.13-second deepfake video featuring Peter Obi, a prominent Nigerian presidential candidate and former governor of Anambra State, falsely claimed that he (Peter Obi) lifted 439 million Nigerians out of poverty during his tenure as Anambra's governor. This assertion has been widely debunked by fact-checkers, as it raises serious questions about his integrity and competence, particularly given that Nigeria's population was approximately 178,509,000 in 2014 when he was still a governor.

The video, which exhibits signs of manipulation, shows Obi making a claim that lacks credibility and context. It is evident that the production quality is subpar, with artificial facial expressions and lip movements that do not sync with the audio. This mismatch further supports the conclusion that the footage is a deepfake. The original video, available for viewing, clarifies that Obi was referencing to the success of the Millennium Development Goals in China, which helped lift 439 million citizens out of poverty—not Nigerians.

The AI-generated deepfake video can be accessed on Facebook at https://web.facebook.com/watch/?extid=CL-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=Nif5oz&v=1156588275263995. In contrast, the original video that was manipulated is available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGP-pfW6oXs&feature=youtu.be. The original footage reveals that Peter Obi discussed how China lifted 439 million people out of poverty through the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, not that he pulled Nigerians out of poverty.

Akewushola (2022) noted that a now-deleted tweet from user @AdeBashh stated: “In his usual ways of making false claims and lying effortlessly. Peter Obi is here again claiming he pulled 439 million people out of poverty. Obidients, is this your new order?” This tweet garnered over 100 retweets and 200,000 views (Akewushola, 2022).

Despite the ongoing debate surrounding the video, it is likely that it was deliberately created and circulated to mislead voters and damage Obi's reputation. The spread of such misinformation could have significant implications for Obi's campaign, especially during an election, as “AI-generated deepfake videos can hamper voters' ability to make well-informed choices” (Whyte, 2020, p. 215).

This deepfake serves as a compelling case study for several reasons. Firstly, it directly relates to the broader discourse surrounding AI-generated deepfakes and their impact on social identities, especially during the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections. The timing of the video's release in October 2022, just before the elections, underscores its potential influence on political narratives and voter sentiment. More so, the video exemplifies how deepfakes can shape public perceptions of candidates and their campaigns. Analyzing the video's impact offers valuable insights into the political ramifications of such technology, particularly its ability to sway opinions amidst a highly charged electoral environment.

Visual, Audio and Textual Analysis of the Case Study

The video has likely undergone significant editing, potentially using Photoshop, to exaggerate Peter Obi's lip movements and facial expressions, resulting in an appearance that is both excessive and artificial. At the 0:05 mark, Obi's overly intense smile seems intentionally enhanced, portraying him as untrustworthy and undermining his credibility and reputation. The video's authenticity is further compromised by pixelated visuals and poor lighting, which are hallmarks of low production quality. This observation aligns with the findings of Vizoso et al. (2021), which indicate that poor production quality is a common characteristic of AI-generated deepfakes.

Additionally, the video employs medium shots without any zoom effects, which serves to obscure Obi's facial emotions and insights, creating a façade of seriousness. However, this technique highlights the manipulated nature of the video, reducing its authenticity and contributing to an artificial visual

presentation. The disconcerting medium-shot effect directs the audience's focus primarily to Obi's spoken words, rather than his demeanor.

The color palette utilized in the video is predominantly desaturated, featuring shades of blue and grey, which evoke feelings of sorrow and gravity. While this choice may aim to inspire a sense of dependability and confidence, it ultimately adds to the overall artificiality of the piece. A significant indicator of manipulation is the lack of synchronisation between the audio and Obi's lip movements. During the segment from 0:03 to 0:06, Obi claimed to have lifted 439 million Nigerians out of poverty, yet his lip movements do not align with what is being said. This discrepancy raises serious concerns about the video's authenticity and suggests it may have been artificially generated. Furthermore, the blurred faces of individuals surrounding Obi indicate an attempt to obscure the identities of those who could potentially validate the video's claims.

The audio quality is notably poor, marked by obvious distortions and echoes. This lack of clarity and focus detracts from the video's credibility, giving the impression that it is a hastily produced forgery rather than a genuine address from Obi. The audio lacks variation and depth, resulting in diminished emotional resonance and persuasive impact. Moreover, the absence of text overlays or subtitles raises questions about the intent behind the video. This omission may have been a deliberate strategy to obscure manipulated content. Obi's assertion of having lifted 439 million Nigerians out of poverty is particularly egregious, especially considering that Nigeria's population is projected to be less than 229 million as of July 25, 2024 (Worldometers, 2024). Such a claim could significantly damage Obi's reputation, fostering distrust among the electorates.

The video's credibility is further undermined by its lack of contextual information or evidence supporting Obi's claims. The absence of accountability and transparency weakens the reliability of the message. The assertion lacks specificity, failing to detail Obi's strategies or plans for addressing poverty. The overall lack of authenticity is compounded by the combination of manipulated text, audio and visuals. The deliberate spread of misinformation, coupled with coordination issues and subpar production quality, hampers the creation of a compelling narrative for voters. Ultimately, the spurious nature of the video erodes public confidence in authority and the democratic process, potentially diminishing support for Peter Obi during his campaign.

Narrative Structure Analysis: Storyline, plot twists and characterisation

The narrative structure, unexpected developments and character portrayals within the video are crafted to enhance its perceived realism and impact. At the core of Obi's argument is a straightforward premise: he claims to have helped 439 million Nigerians escape poverty. However, this assertion is immediately called into question, as Nigeria's population is approximately 229 million, making his claim mathematically impossible. The discord between the video's portrayal and verifiable facts fosters ambiguity and skepticism, significantly undermining its credibility.

The plot lacks substantive depth and clarity, failing to outline the methods Obi employed to achieve this alleged feat or the policies he enacted to combat poverty. This absence of clarity raises serious doubts about the video's authenticity and intent. At 0:05 seconds, Obi asserts that he lifted 439 million Nigerians out of poverty, yet this claim is devoid of supporting data or contextual information. The absence of robust evidence further weakens the narrative, increasing skepticism among viewers.

Moreover, the video does not introduce significant plot twists due to its simplistic premise. The blatant inaccuracy of Obi's claim renders it more akin to propaganda than a genuine representation of his achievements. The lack of thorough analysis regarding poverty or economic policy diminishes the video’s credibility and reliability. It is crucial to assess how Peter Obi is portrayed in this context. He is depicted as a confident and assertive individual who proudly recounts his accomplishments. However, the evident inaccuracies in his claims and the lack of realism compromise the video's integrity. At 0:05, Obi's overly enthusiastic smile appears staged, which could damage his reputation by presenting him as disingenuous and unworthy of public trust.

Additionally, there is a striking absence of critical analysis or supporting evidence that would substantiate the portrayal of Obi as a heroic figure combating poverty. Claims must be supported by credible evidence to be deemed valid (Vizoso et al., 2021; Trammel, 2023). The video's lack of complexity casts doubt on Obi’s genuine intentions and aspirations. Overall, the narrative is simplistic and absurd, marred by its obvious fabrication. The storyline, lack of unexpected developments and portrayal of Obi contribute to the video's overall lack of realism and believability. Nonetheless, the sophistication of deepfake technology may allow some viewers to accept the video at face value, potentially leading them to be misled.

Themes Analysis: Political Themes, Social Themes and Emotional Appeals

Thematically, the deepfake video can be categorized into three major areas: social, political and emotional appeals. Within the context of Nigerian politics, the video addresses prevalent issues such as incompetence, corruption and political instability. Obi is portrayed as a courageous leader fighting against these societal ills and advocating for the people, which appears to be a strategic maneuver designed to capitalize on the discontent among Nigerians towards their political elites and to garner electoral support. However, the video's impact is significantly diminished by its lack of authenticity and the artificial nature of its presentation.

More so, the content of the video explores themes of societal discontent, distrust and frustration. Obi emphasizes the need for Nigeria to reclaim its sovereignty, reflecting an attempt to resonate with the public's dissatisfaction with their leaders and the prevailing socio-political climate. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this message is severely undermined by the video's questionable credibility as a deepfake. The urgency and call to action that it seeks to convey are eroded by its synthetic appearance and inherent lack of authenticity, ultimately detracting from any genuine emotional engagement it might have elicited.

Tone and Language Analysis

The tone and language of the deepfake video reveals significant insights into its rhetorical strategies. The language is characterized by a direct and assertive style, employing a harsh, critical and derogatory tone. This solemnity creates a sense of urgency and importance. At the 0:03 to 0:06 seconds mark, Obi confidently asserts, “I was able to pull 439 million people out from poverty.” However, the lack of authenticity in the video detracts from its credibility, ultimately undermining its critique of Nigeria's leadership and political class. However, the video's language is straightforward, clear and commanding, designed to resonate personally with viewers. Its uncomplicated wording fosters empathy, making it accessible and leaving little room for misinterpretation. This transparency aims to instill a sense of urgency and a call to action.

Manipulation and Bias Analysis

The deepfake video through strategic editing and persuasive techniques, crafts a misleading emotional appeal, fostering a false sense of connection between the viewer and Obi. Selective editing can significantly influence audience perceptions, as the video intentionally omits information that would contradict Obi's claims. Okolie (2023, p. 11) highlights that “face manipulation is a supplementary technique used in AI-generated deepfake videos.” In this instance,

Obi's facial expressions are artificially enhanced to convey emotions that may lack authenticity. Additionally, the video reflects political bias against rival parties, revealing an underlying prejudice while simultaneously advocating for voter support for Peter Obi. This combination of manipulative techniques and biased presentation serves to distort the political landscape, further complicating the viewer's ability to engage critically with the content.

Discussion of Findings

The visual, auditory and linguistic elements of the deepfake video reveals a range of techniques that contribute to an impression of insincerity and artificiality. The excessive facial expressions exhibited by Peter Obi, coupled with poor production quality and a noticeable mismatch between his lip movements and the audio, classify the video as a deepfake. This assessment is supported by findings from fact-checkers such as *Fact Check Hub*, which confirm the video's misleading nature and the exaggerated statistics presented. Research by Nwokeocha and Etifit (2024, p. 70) indicates that "deepfake videos may significantly influence how individuals perceive their social identities" and can compromise the credibility of political figures.

The narrative structure of the video is also problematic, lacking essential context, depth and evidence to substantiate Obi's claims. Its straightforward storyline, devoid of significant plot developments, suggests that it functions more as propaganda than as a genuine representation of the candidate's message. This aligns with findings from multiple studies (Nwokeocha & Etifit, 2024; Oladoyinbo et al., 2024; Nnamdi, Oniyinde & Abegunde, 2023), which indicate that deepfake videos often prioritize sensational narratives over nuanced political discourse.

Moreover, the themes and language employed in the video appear to deliberately exploit the frustrations and emotions of Nigerian voters. Obi is often positioned as a steadfast advocate against corruption and incompetence in political discussions. However, the artificiality and lack of authenticity in the video diminish the effectiveness of these emotional appeals, particularly in the context of the 2023 presidential election. Deepfake videos can erode viewer trust and lead to disillusionment, as noted by Nnamdi, Oniyinde and Abegunde (2023).

The tone and language of the video convey a somber, critical and confrontational demeanor. As Maruyama (2021) points out, deepfake videos frequently employ provocative and assertive language to sway public opinion. Techniques such as

selective editing, emotional manipulation and facial expression alteration contribute to this deceptive tone, reinforcing the biases and strategies inherent in AI-generated deepfakes.

Furthermore, the tactics of manipulation, biases and the overall lack of authenticity and transparency in the video foster skepticism among viewers. This raises concerns about the potential implications of deepfake videos on electoral integrity and public support for Peter Obi, as well as for any electorate that engages with such content. The findings underscore the importance of enhancing media literacy, fostering public awareness and implementing robust fact-checking mechanisms to mitigate the widespread dissemination of deepfake videos and their influence on social identity formation during election periods.

Conclusion

The study concludes that AI-generated deepfake videos capitalized on existing ideological and socioeconomic divides, exacerbating political discontent and threatening the integrity of Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. Voters, especially those with strong political affiliations, were more likely to endorse and share deepfake content that resonated with their existing beliefs and group loyalties thus forming their social identity. The proliferation of these videos heightened ideological conflicts and diminished voters' ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Additionally, the deceptive and artificial nature of these campaigns had potentials to erode voter confidence and fostered disillusionment, hindering the development of a cohesive social identity formation for Peter Obi during the 2023 Nigerian presidential election. Techniques such as selective editing, poor production quality and exaggerated emotional expressions were employed in the deepfake video of Peter Obi. These elements contributed to an impression of deceit and insincerity, jeopardizing both the reputation of political candidates and the democratic process itself. More so, deepfake videos favored sensationalism and simplistic narratives over nuanced political discourse during the 2023 election.

Through focusing on the emotions and grievances of voters rather than providing accurate information, these videos complicated the ability of Nigerian electorates to establish a unified social identity throughout the electoral process. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The Nigerian legislature should create comprehensive laws and regulations to restrict the use of deepfake technology. For those that must

use it, clear policies should be established to guide the ethical development and application of this technology.

2. Social media platforms should implement advanced detection and mitigation tools to help identify and report deepfake content as part of a broader strategy that includes clear content moderation policies and user reporting options to curb the spread of manipulated material.
3. Political campaigns and candidates should prioritize honest communication and promote the use of verified media sources to build voter trust.
4. Voters and civic organisations should launch educational programmes focused on enhancing critical media literacy.

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