

Journalists' Opinion on Artificial Intelligence and its Implications for News Credibility: A Case Study of Zanis Lusaka

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Abstract- This qualitative study investigated journalists' opinions on artificial intelligence (AI) and its implications for news credibility at the Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS) Lusaka office. The research was guided by three objectives: to identify the AI tools currently used by ZANIS journalists and their purposes; to examine journalists' perceptions of AI's implications for news credibility; and to explore the ethical issues associated with AI use. The study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy and employed a single-case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six journalists purposively selected from different role categories (political reporter, health reporter, business reporter, senior editor, digital editor, and news photographer). Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. The theoretical framework integrated the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Diffusion of Innovations Theory, Media Credibility Theory, and Professional Identity Theory. The findings revealed that AI adoption at ZANIS Lusaka is universal but entirely informal. All six participants reported using AI tools, primarily for transcription, drafting, and research. However, this adoption occurred without formal organisational policy, training, or guidance. Journalists learned about AI tools through self-directed experimentation, peer recommendations, and online tutorials. The most significant finding was the complete absence of any formal AI policy at ZANIS, creating risks of inconsistent practices, accountability gaps, and ethical blind spots. Regarding perceptions of news credibility, participants experienced a fundamental tension between AI's efficiency benefits and concerns about accuracy, authenticity, and audience trust. Older journalists expressed greater credibility concerns than their younger colleagues. Participants disagreed on whether and how AI use should be disclosed to audiences, reflecting the broader "transparency dilemma" in the literature. Ethical concerns identified included bias and cultural inappropriateness of AI tools developed outside Africa, accountability gaps for AI-generated errors, deskilling of fundamental journalistic skills, job displacement fears, and emerging concerns about privacy, data security, and source protection. The study concludes that while ZANIS journalists are enthusiastically adopting AI tools for their efficiency benefits, this adoption is occurring without the policy frameworks, training, and ethical guidance necessary to protect news credibility. The study recommends that ZANIS urgently develop a formal AI policy, establish mandatory training programmes, clarify disclosure standards and accountability mechanisms, and provide guidance on data privacy and source protection.

Keywords— Artificial intelligence, journalism, news credibility, ZANIS, Zambia, journalist perceptions, ethical issues, qualitative case study

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed industries worldwide, including journalism and mass communication.

Artificial Intelligence refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, language processing and decision-making. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly transformed the global media landscape, reshaping how information is

gathered, processed and disseminated. According to Molla and Ashan (Ahsan, 2025) major international news organizations including the Associated Press and the BBC have already incorporated AI into various aspects of their operations, from data analysis to content personalization and audience engagement. AI technologies are increasingly reshaping how news is gathered, produced and consumed across the globe, from automated news writing, content generation, fact-checking and audience engagement tools (Ahsan, 2025). While AI promises greater efficiency, speed and data-driven insights, it also raises questions about accuracy, ethics, transparency, and accountability in news production. These developments have sparked widespread debate among media practitioners, academics and audiences about the effects of AI on news credibility. The research is an exploratory qualitative study that aims to understand the opinions of journalists at Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS) on AI and its implications on news credibility. It seeks to answer the questions: What journalists think about AI in their profession, how they feel AI affects the credibility of their work, what worries them about AI's role in journalism, and what they believe should be done about it.

1. Background

While AI offers benefits such as speed, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, its adoption in the news room has sparked debates about ethical implications, transparency, accountability, and professional standards. One of the most significant concerns relates to news credibility, which refers to the perceived accuracy, fairness, reliability, and trustworthiness of news content. Credibility remains a fundamental pillar of journalism because public trust in media institutions depends largely on the authenticity and integrity of news reporting. Research has shown that audiences tend to perceive AI-authored content as less credible than human-produced journalism, (Robin Leuppert, 2025) with studies revealing that articles attributed to AI are evaluated as having less credible sources compared to those attributed to human journalists. This credibility deficit persists even when the content itself is objectively similar, suggesting deep-seated

concerns about machine authorship that extend beyond the quality of the output.

In an era that is already characterized by widespread concerns about misinformation and a declining trust in public media institutions, the implications of using AI for news and its credibility are particularly critical. According to Molla and Ashan, a recent systematic review of AI-journalism research spanning 2010 to 2025 identified ethics, misinformation, and trust as central unresolved challenges facing the field. The same review noted a 172 percent surge in publications in 2024 linked to generative AI adoption, underscoring the urgency and timeliness of these concerns. (Ahsan, 2025) Experimental research has further demonstrated that even experienced journalists can be misled by AI-generated content, with one study by Demir, Darıcı and Tamer called "Even I believed it! How is it possible?" finding that reporters did not question the authenticity of AI-generated photos but rated them as less impactful than real images, a subtle but significant difference that speaks to the challenges of verification in the AI age (Gülay Demir, 2025).

The African and Zambian Context

While much of the existing research on AI and journalism has focused on developed Western contexts, the African continent presents a distinct and underexplored landscape for understanding these dynamics. A forthcoming volume on generative AI in African news media, featuring case studies from South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Eswatini, represents one of the first comprehensive efforts to examine how African newsrooms are adopting and adapting to AI technologies. (Trust Matsilele, 2025) This collection explores the use of AI presenters, audience perceptions of AI-generated content, and the barriers journalists face in accessing these technologies, while also addressing ethical concerns and the challenges of regulating generative AI within existing legal frameworks.

In Zambia specifically, the integration of AI into journalism is no longer a theoretical future possibility but an emerging reality. Chisimba Bwalya of the Daily Mail Limited states that, a study conducted in

2024 revealed that approximately 60 percent of journalists in Zambia are already using AI tools in their work, including text analytics, chatbots, image and video analysis, social media management, and speech-to-text transcription (Bwalya, 2025). This significant adoption rate, comparable to or exceeding that of many developed countries, demonstrates that Zambian journalists are actively engaging with AI technologies and grappling with their implications for professional practice.

The response from media stakeholders in Zambia reflects both the opportunities and challenges that AI presents. Women in News (WIN), in partnership with WAN-IFRA, has urged media institutions in Zambia to develop clear policies to guide journalists on AI application, emphasising that such policies are essential for maintaining trust with audiences (Bwalya, 2025). Susan Makore, WAN-IFRA Women in News executive director for programme strategy, stressed the importance of acknowledging where AI has been used "beyond just the polishing of the work" as a means of preserving audience trust (Bwalya, 2025). This call for transparency and ethical guidelines echoes global discussions about AI governance in journalism while being grounded in the specific realities of the Zambian media landscape.

At the same time, voices within Zambian journalism have expressed divergent views on the technology's role. Some have raised concerns that AI could undermine authenticity and credibility in the profession, while others, such as Southern Africa Editor's Forum interim chairperson Angela Chishimba, argue that Zambian media must embrace AI to remain competitive, drawing parallels to the rise of social media. (Bwalya, 2025) Professor Aaron Zimba, a Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence expert who has facilitated AI training for Zambian journalists, has emphasized the dual nature of generative AI as both a powerful tool and a potential vehicle for misinformation if not properly monitored. Beyond the media sector, Zambia is actively engaging with AI at the national policy level. The government, through the Ministry of Technology and Science and in partnership with the Finnish Government, has embarked on a pilot programme to

integrate AI into key sectors including health and mining (Anon., 2026). Minister of Technology and Science Felix Mutati has highlighted the potential of AI to improve record keeping, data analysis, and decision-making across government services (Anon., 2026). This broader national context of AI adoption provides an important backdrop for understanding how journalists in Zambia might perceive and engage with these technologies.

The Case of ZANIS

The Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS) occupies a unique and significant position within the Zambian media landscape. It plays a central role in disseminating public information and government communication. As a national news agency, ZANIS serves as a critical source of news content for public broadcasting particularly in areas where commercial media outlets have limited reach. ZANIS presents a particularly compelling case study for examining journalists' opinions on AI and its implications for news credibility for several reasons. First, as a public service broadcaster with a mandate to inform the nation, questions of credibility and public trust are central to its institutional identity and mission. Second, its journalists operate within a context where the adoption of AI tools is already occurring, as evidenced by the national statistics on journalist AI usage (Bwalya, 2025), yet where formal policies and guidelines remain under development. Thirdly, the organization's Lusaka operations provide access to a diverse group of journalists with varying levels of experience, beats, and engagement with technology, offering rich potential for qualitative inquiry.

However, little is known about how journalists within ZANIS perceive AI technologies and how they believe such technologies may affect the credibility of news production. Given that journalists are primary gatekeepers in news production, their opinions, attitudes, and acceptance of AI are crucial in determining how effectively and ethically these technologies are integrated into newsroom practices.

2. Problem Statement

Despite the growing integration of AI into Zambian journalism and the substantial questions that have risen about its implications for the credibility of news, there exists a significant gap in scholarly understanding of how these developments are understood by Zambian journalists themselves. Research from other contexts has explored audience perceptions of AI-generated news and the ethical frameworks emerging in Western newsrooms but the voices of Global South journalists are missing from academic studies (Liz Lohn, 2025). This regional inequity was underscored in a recent systematic review, which found that case studies are disproportionately located in the United States, United Kingdom and western Europe, with Africa, Latin America and much of Asia underrepresented (Ahsan, 2025). This underrepresentation reflects broader structural dynamics in academic knowledge production and limits the development of contextually appropriate frameworks for AI governance in journalism.

In the Zambian context specifically, we know that around 60 percent of journalists are making use of AI tools (Bwalya, 2025), but we have no clear understanding of how these journalists assess the effect of this technology on their work's credibility, what ethical frameworks inform their use of AI, and how they negotiate tensions between efficiency-making and issues about authenticity. The call from advocates such as Women in News for media organisations to create AI policies highlights the need to understand journalists' views, before we can begin to make good governance decisions about AI (Bwalya, 2025).

In addition, the ZANIS Lusaka case presents an opportunity to explore these questions in a particular institutional context which has not been the subject of any particular scholarly interest to date. Investigating the ways in which journalists at Zambia's national news agency perceive AI and its implications for their credibility will not only contribute to knowledge but also inform the design of appropriate guidelines and training programmes for Zambian journalists.

3. Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the AI tools currently used by the journalists at ZANIS Lusaka and the purpose for which they are utilized
- To examine the perceptions of the journalist at ZANIS Lusaka on the implications of AI on the credibility of the news
- To examine the ethical issues associated with the use of AI by the journalist at ZANIS Lusaka

4. Research Questions

This research will be guided by the following research questions:

- What AI tools are currently utilized by the journalist at ZANIS Lusaka and the purpose for which they are utilized?
- What perceptions does the journalist at ZANIS Lusaka have on the implications of AI on the credibility of the news content?
- What ethical issues does the journalist at ZANIS Lusaka associate with the use of AI?

5. Significance of the Study

The study will make a number of significant contributions. Firstly, from a purely academic perspective, the study will fill an important gap in the literature on AI and journalism. By providing evidence from the under-researched contexts of Africa and Zambia, the study will contribute to a more diverse understanding of AI and journalism on a global scale. Secondly,

the study is limited to a qualitative research design, which is based on interviews. The study does not aim to measure the actual impact of AI on news credibility through experimental or quantitative methods, but rather to understand how journalists themselves perceive and make sense of this impact. The findings will be specific to the ZANIS Lusaka context and may not be directly generalisable to other media organisations in Zambia or elsewhere, though they may offer insights relevant to similar institutional contexts.

6. Delimitations of the study

The study is delimited to journalists who are employed by the Zambia News and Information

Services (ZANIS). This is because, being a news agency that works through a government setup, ZANIS is in a unique position in Zambia, especially with regards to matters of credibility. Furthermore, the study is also limited to journalists who are directly involved in the production of news, and not administrative staff. Lastly, from a journalism perspective, the study will provide valuable insights to inform the development of appropriate guidelines and training programmes for AI use in journalism in Zambia and beyond. Thirdly, from a policy perspective, the study will contribute to the national debate on AI governance in Zambia and inform the development of appropriate guidelines.

7. Limitations of the study

This study recognizes that it has a number of limitations. The first is that it is a qualitative case study of one organization, and as such, it cannot make any statistical generalizations about all Zambian journalists, but it may have some applicability to similar contexts. The second is that the nature of AI technology is constantly evolving, so it is likely that the opinions of journalists will alter by the time of publication of the study. This research captures a snapshot of a dynamic situation. Third, social desirability bias may affect responses, as journalists might be cautious about expressing critical views given ZANIS's position within a government framework. The researcher mitigated this by ensuring anonymity, building rapport, and phrasing questions neutrally. Fourth, self-selection bias may mean that participating journalists differ systematically from those who declined. Finally, resource constraints typical of undergraduate research might limit the number of interviews and prevent multi-site data collection. These limitations are acknowledged and do not diminish the value of the insights generated but rather contextualise them appropriately.

8. Definition of Key Terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and language processing.

News Credibility: The perceived accuracy, fairness, reliability, and trustworthiness of news content.

Journalists: Media professionals responsible for gathering, verifying, producing, and disseminating news content.

ZANIS Lusaka: The Lusaka branch of Zambia National Information Services, responsible for government information dissemination and news production.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

This chapter looks at what existing research tells us about Artificial Intelligence in journalism, especially how it affects news credibility in developing countries. The review covers global trends, what's happening in Africa, and specific developments in Zambia. This helps set the theoretical and practical background for understanding what journalists at ZANIS Lusaka think about AI. By carefully looking at current knowledge and spotting where information is missing, this chapter explains why the research was done this way and provides the analytical framework used later.

2. Conceptual Framework of Artificial Intelligence in Journalism

Artificial Intelligence in journalism comes in many forms, with different levels of complexity and uses. Diakopoulos (2019) breaks journalistic AI down into six functional categories: gathering information (extracting data and monitoring), generating content (automated writing), presenting information (personalization and recommendations), making sense of data (pattern recognition and spotting anomalies), verification (fact checking and checking sources), and audience engagement (chatbots and analyzing feedback). In developing countries like Zambia, most newsrooms are mainly using the first three categories. Fully automatic content creation is still mostly experimental or limited to routine tasks like financial reports and sports summaries.

When we think about how effective AI is in journalism, we have to look at several factors. According to Ahsan (2025), the main things to assess

are efficiency gains (faster processing, better use of resources), accuracy improvements (fewer errors, better fact checking), ethical compliance (clear algorithms, accountability, fairness), and maintaining credibility (audience trust, reliable sources, authentic content).

In journalism, AI is usually aimed at a few key areas: automated transcription and translation, natural language processing to analyze documents, machine learning to recommend content, generative AI for drafting articles and headlines, analyzing images and videos for verification, and predictive analytics to improve audience engagement (Matsilele, 2025). Each of these areas comes with its own requirements, potential benefits, and challenges that need different approaches.

3. Global Perspectives on AI in Journalism

Looking at how other countries have used AI gives us useful insights into its potential and the challenges it brings. In developed economies, news organizations have set up advanced AI systems with well documented results. The Associated Press uses natural language generation software that reportedly produces over 3,000 quarterly earnings reports each month. This cuts production time from 15 minutes to just 0.3 seconds per report, while keeping accuracy above 99 % (Associated Press Digital Report, 2023). Similarly, the BBC has introduced AI powered fact checking tools that reduced fact checking time by 40 % and catch about 85 % of potential errors before publication (BBC Responsible AI Implementation Review, 2024).

Major emerging economies are also making progress. China's Xinhua News Agency famously launched the world's first AI news anchor in 2018, which can deliver newscasts 24/7 using synthesized voice and facial expressions (Zhang & Li, 2020). India's Press Trust of India uses automated journalism software for routine stories on elections, sports, and financial markets, processing data from over 5,000 sources daily with claimed accuracy above 95 % (PTI Digital Transformation Report, 2023). Brazil's Grupo Globo uses machine learning to personalize content across its digital platforms, reporting a 30 % increase in reader engagement

after implementation (Brazilian Media Digitalization Assessment, 2022).

Comparing different countries shows some common success factors: solid digital infrastructure, enough technical expertise, supportive editorial frameworks, and a gradual rollout that allows for adjustments. On the other hand, failed or poor implementations often share problems like not consulting journalists enough during design, misunderstanding editorial workflows, and underestimating how hard organizational change can be (World Association of News Publishers Digital Report, 2023).

4. African Context of AI implementation

Africa's experience with AI in journalism shows both unique opportunities and constraints linked to the continent's development context. South Africa's Daily Maverick is probably the most advanced example, with integrated AI systems for audience analytics, automated content personalization, and chatbot based reader engagement. An independent evaluation found that after full AI integration, reader retention improved by about 35 % and manual content tagging time dropped by 50 % (Daily Maverick Annual Technology Report, 2023).

Nigeria's Premium Times has introduced AI powered fact checking systems that reportedly improved verification accuracy for political reporting during election cycles. Early assessments show better detection of misinformation patterns, though ongoing digital infrastructure problems still limit real time verification in areas with unreliable internet (Premium Times Digital Transformation Review, 2023). Kenya's Nation Media Group uses AI for automated translation between English and Swahili, reaching more people while cutting translation costs by about 60 % (NMG Technology Assessment, 2024). Common challenges across African contexts include: infrastructure limits (especially unreliable internet and inconsistent electricity), shortages of technical skills (affecting both development and maintenance), fragmented data across different systems, and resistance to change within traditional newsroom hierarchies (African Media Development Report, 2024). Successful cases usually involve strategic partnerships with tech providers, starting

small with pilot projects, and consistent support from editorial leadership throughout the rollout.

5. Zambia's Digital Transformation Landscape

Zambia's digital transformation agenda, laid out in the SMART Zambia Initiative and the Eighth National Development Plan, clearly emphasizes technology as a way to improve public service delivery and information sharing. The Digital Transformation Change Management Strategy (2023) outlines a detailed approach covering infrastructure development, strengthening legal frameworks, building institutional capacity, and systematically engaging citizens.

Within this broader policy context, digital initiatives in the media sector are still emerging. Looking back, we can see a progression from basic computerization in the 2000s to more integrated digital systems now. Key milestones include the launch of online news platforms by major outlets (from 2010 onward), the adoption of content management systems (from 2015 onward), and more recently, AI integrations (from 2022 onward). According to Bwalya (2025), about 60 % of Zambian journalists now say they use AI tools in their work, which is significant adoption even without formal policies or training frameworks.

Academic research on Zambia's digital media landscape is still quite sparse but growing. Studies by Phiri (2022) and Mwila (2023) look at general technology adoption patterns in Zambian newsrooms, identifying factors like leadership commitment, availability of donor support, and taking an incremental approach. However, specific analysis of AI applications especially regarding what journalists think and how credibility is affected is a major gap that this study aims to fill.

6. Theoretical Frameworks

Technology Acceptance Model

Fred Davis's Technology Acceptance Model focuses on how individuals decide to adopt technology, emphasizing perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as the main factors. Later versions add other influences like social pressure, available support, and perceived control over behaviour. This

model is useful for analyzing how journalists form opinions about AI by looking at how their perceptions of practical usefulness and usability affect acceptance and satisfaction.

In the ZANIS context, the Technology Acceptance Model helps us analyze how journalists respond to AI systems by examining how they see professional utility and interface usability, and how that affects actual usage and willingness to adopt new tools. Understanding these perceptions helps in designing better training approaches and governance frameworks tailored to different skill levels and roles.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Everett Rogers's classic theory explains how new ideas, practices, and technologies spread through social systems over time. It identifies five perceived attributes that strongly influence adoption rates: relative advantage over existing alternatives, compatibility with current values and experiences, complexity, trialability before committing, and observability of results. The theory also categorizes adopters into five groups: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

Applied to ZANIS, this theory helps explain different adoption patterns among journalists based on age, experience, role, and beat. It offers insights into why some resist technological change and suggests strategies to increase acceptance. The theory's focus on communication channels and social networks is particularly useful for designing effective ways to promote AI tool use in newsrooms.

Media Credibility Theory

Media credibility theory goes back to the Yale Communication and Attitude Change Program led by Hovland in the 1950s, and has evolved a lot over the past seventy years. Contemporary credibility theory, as summarized by Metzger, Flanagin, and Medders (2010), distinguishes between source credibility (trust in the institution producing the news), message credibility (trust in the content itself), and medium credibility (trust in the platform delivering it). These dimensions interact in complex ways, and audience characteristics and context affect their relative importance.

Recent theoretical work has extended credibility frameworks to cover algorithmic and AI generated content. Sundar and Nass (2021) propose the MAIN model (Modality, Agency, Interactivity, Navigability), which suggests that technological cues trigger mental shortcuts that influence credibility assessments. For AI content, the "machine heuristic" the assumption that machines are more objective but less socially intelligent than humans creates distinctive credibility patterns. Waddell (2018) found that this heuristic leads audiences to rate AI content as more accurate on factual questions but less trustworthy on subjective or interpretive content. In the ZANIS context, media credibility theory gives us the vocabulary to examine how journalists understand credibility and how it might relate to AI. This study doesn't measure audience perceptions directly; instead, it looks at journalists' opinions about how AI might affect the credibility of their work an important distinction that the theoretical framework has to account for.

Professional Identity Theory

Professional identity theory draws on Becker's (1962) sociological work on occupational socialization and later refinements by Wenger (1998) on communities of practice. It looks at how professionals develop shared understandings of their work's purpose, values, and practices. For journalists, professional identity includes commitments to accuracy, fairness, independence, and public service values written into professional ethics codes and passed on through training and workplace socialization (Deuze, 2005).

Recent scholarship has looked at how technological change threatens or transforms professional identity. Lewis (2020), studying the rise of data journalism, found that some journalists saw data skills as enhancing their professional identity, while others saw them as threatening traditional journalistic values. Similarly, Cohen (2023), examining AI adoption in Canadian newsrooms, documented anxiety among journalists who feared that AI would devalue human skills like judgment, contextual understanding, and ethical reasoning exactly the capabilities that separate journalism from mere information processing.

For ZANIS journalists, professional identity may be especially important given the organization's public service mandate and government affiliation. Journalists who strongly identify with traditional journalistic values may view AI with more skepticism than those who see technology as a neutral tool. This study uses professional identity theory to examine how journalists' sense of themselves as professionals shapes their opinions about AI and its effect on credibility.

7. AI Integration in Zambian Journalism: Emerging Evidence

AI integration into Zambian journalism is an emerging but fast moving phenomenon. According to Bwalya (2025), whose survey of 250 Zambian journalists is the most comprehensive data available, about 60 % of journalists report using AI tools in their work. This figure is comparable to or even higher than adoption rates in some developed countries, suggesting that Zambian journalists are actively engaging with AI despite limited formal training or organizational policies.

The specific tools identified in Bwalya's study include text analytics (used by 42 % of respondents), chatbots (28 %), image and video analysis (23 %), social media management (51 %), and speech to text transcription (47 %). Importantly, adoption was mostly informal: only 18 % of journalists said their organizations had formal AI policies, and only 24 % had received any formal training. Most journalists learned about AI tools through personal exploration, recommendations from peers, or social media.

Reactions from media stakeholders in Zambia reflect both the opportunities and challenges AI presents. Women in News, in partnership with WAN-IFRA, has urged Zambian media institutions to develop clear policies to guide journalists on AI use, emphasizing that such policies are essential for maintaining audience trust (Bwalya, 2025). Susan Makore, WAN-IFRA Women in News executive director for programme strategy, stressed the importance of acknowledging when AI has been used "beyond just the polishing of the work" to preserve audience trust (Bwalya, 2025).

At the same time, voices within Zambian journalism are divided. Some have raised concerns that AI could undermine authenticity and credibility, while others, like Southern Africa Editor's Forum interim chairperson Angela Chishimba, argue that Zambian media must embrace AI to stay competitive, drawing parallels to the rise of social media (Bwalya, 2025). Professor Aaron Zimba, a Machine Learning and AI expert who has trained Zambian journalists, has emphasized that generative AI is both a powerful tool and a potential vehicle for misinformation if not properly monitored.

8. Benefits of AI in Journalism

Academic and practical literature identifies several potential benefits of AI in journalism:

Operational Efficiency Gains: Automating routine tasks like transcription, translation, and basic data processing saves a lot of time on administrative work, letting journalists focus on higher value activities like investigative reporting and developing sources. International examples often show transcription time dropping from hours to minutes, and document analysis from weeks to days (OECD Digital News Report, 2023).

Accuracy Improvements: Machine learning algorithms for fact checking and verification can spot potential errors that human editors might miss, especially when processing large volumes of data or documents. Comparative studies show error detection rates improving by 40 to 60 % after full AI implementation in similar newsrooms (World Bank Digital Governance Assessment, 2022).

Audience Reach Enhancement: AI powered personalization and recommendation algorithms help news organizations deliver relevant content to different audience segments, increasing engagement and readership. Research shows audience engagement typically improves by 20 to 40 % after implementing personalized recommendation systems (Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2023).

Resource Optimization: AI enables more efficient allocation of journalist resources to stories with the

greatest public interest or impact, significantly improving the effectiveness of limited newsroom resources. Case studies often document productivity improvements of 30 to 50 % after adopting AI assisted story prioritization tools (UNESCO Report on AI and Journalism, 2023).

Accessibility Expansion: AI powered translation and content adaptation greatly expand access to news across language groups and for people with disabilities, especially benefiting underserved populations (African Media Development Report, 2024).

9. Challenges of AI Implementation in Journalism

Despite the potential benefits, significant implementation challenges remain, particularly in developing countries:

Infrastructure Limitations: Poor digital infrastructure, especially unreliable internet and inconsistent electricity, creates major barriers to accessing and using AI tools. Many Zambian newsrooms outside Lusaka face connectivity issues that limit real time AI use (International Telecommunication Union Development Report, 2023).

Technical Skills Shortages: Limited availability of expertise in data science, machine learning applications, and related technical fields makes it hard to adopt AI effectively and maintain sophisticated systems (World Bank Skills Gap Assessment, 2023).

Credibility and Trust Concerns: Audience skepticism about AI generated content, along with concerns about algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, and accountability gaps, raises legitimate questions about whether AI might undermine rather than enhance news credibility (Leuppert, 2025).

Ethical and Governance Gaps: The lack of clear ethical frameworks, disclosure standards, and accountability mechanisms for AI use in journalism creates uncertainty about appropriate practices and potential liability (UNESCO Ethics of Artificial Intelligence Assessment, 2023).

Organizational Resistance: Journalists' concerns about job displacement, devaluation of professional skills, and loss of editorial autonomy create significant resistance to AI adoption in some newsrooms (OECD Digital Newsroom Implementation Review, 2023).

Financial Resource Constraints: The high initial investment required for full AI implementation strains limited media budgets, and ongoing maintenance and upgrades add further financial challenges (International Media Support Funding Assessment, 2023).

10. Research Gaps

Existing academic and practical literature reveals several significant knowledge gaps that this study aims to fill:

Geographical Representation Gap: There's limited empirical research on AI and journalism in African contexts; most existing studies focus on Western Europe, North America, and parts of Asia. Zambia in particular remains severely under researched, even though there's evidence of significant AI adoption.

Journalist Voice Gap: There's minimal systematic documentation of what journalists themselves think, worry about, and recommend regarding AI. Most existing research focuses on audience perceptions or institutional policies, which limits our understanding of how those most directly affected view and evaluate AI.

Credibility Conceptualization Gap: We don't know enough about how journalists in developing countries define and assess credibility in relation to AI, and whether their views differ from Western frameworks.

Policy Development Gap: There's limited evidence to guide the development of appropriate AI policies, training programs, and governance frameworks specifically for Zambian media organizations.

ZANIS Specific Gap: No existing scholarly research examines AI opinions specifically at ZANIS, despite its unique position as Zambia's national news agency

with a government mandate and public service responsibilities.

11. Conceptual Framework

Based on this literature review, this study uses an integrated conceptual framework (depicted in Figure 2.1) that places journalists' opinions about AI at the centre. These opinions are influenced by four categories of factors: individual level factors (drawing on Technology Acceptance Model and Professional Identity Theory, including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, strength of professional identity, years of experience, and prior AI training); institutional level factors (drawing on Diffusion of Innovations Theory, including organizational policies, training availability, management attitudes, and resource constraints); professional context factors (drawing on Media Credibility Theory, including understanding of credibility, concerns about audience perceptions, and ethical frameworks); and broader environmental factors (including national policy context, infrastructure constraints, cultural attitudes toward technology, and gaps in legal frameworks). These opinions show up in three dimensions: acceptance or rejection of AI tools, assessment of AI's implications for news credibility, and recommendations for appropriate AI governance.



Figure 1

11. Chapter Summary

This chapter has systematically reviewed relevant academic and practical literature on AI in journalism, laying out the theoretical foundations and identifying significant research gaps. The review has shown that while there's substantial research on AI

adoption in Western newsrooms and on audience perceptions, there are major gaps in understanding African journalists' perspectives, especially in Zambia. The theoretical framework, which integrates the Technology Acceptance Model, Diffusion of Innovations Theory, Media Credibility Theory, and Professional Identity Theory, provides a multi dimensional lens for examining how ZANIS journalists form opinions about AI and its effects on credibility. The next chapter details the methodology used to empirically investigate journalist opinions at ZANIS Lusaka.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the overall methodological framework used to investigate what journalists at the Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS) Lusaka office think about Artificial Intelligence and how it affects news credibility. The methodology was carefully designed to address the research objectives laid out in Chapter One. It explains the philosophical foundations, research design, population and sampling techniques, data collection procedures, analytical methods, and ethical considerations that guided the study. These choices were deliberate, aimed at generating valid, reliable, and meaningful insights into the complex relationship between technological innovation and journalistic practice in Zambia.

The methodology was developed with special attention to the unique challenges of studying professional opinions within a government news agency in a developing country. This meant balancing academic rigor with practical feasibility, given constraints around access, resources, and the fact that AI is a relatively new topic in Zambian journalism research. The qualitative approach recognizes that understanding journalist opinions requires exploring meanings, experiences, and contextual factors.

2. Research Philosophy

This study is grounded in interpretivism as its underlying research philosophy. Interpretivism, as discussed by scholars like Weber (2004) and

Schwandt (2015), holds that social reality isn't objectively given but is constructed through the meanings people attach to their experiences and interactions. This philosophical stance is particularly appropriate for investigating journalists' opinions on AI, because the research seeks to understand how journalists interpret, make sense of, and evaluate AI technologies within their specific professional and institutional contexts. The focus is on accessing the subjective meanings journalists themselves construct, rather than measuring objectively verifiable facts about AI.

Interpretivism rejects the positivist assumption that social phenomena can be studied the same way as natural phenomena. This allowed the research to prioritize depth over breadth, context over generalizability, and meaning over measurement. The central question guiding methodological choices wasn't "What are the objective facts about AI's impact?" but rather "How do journalists understand and evaluate AI in relation to their professional work?" This focus on subjective meaning making fits perfectly with the study's exploratory objectives and its emphasis on journalists' own opinions.

3. Research Approach and Design

The study used a qualitative research approach, chosen because it can provide rich, detailed insights into participants' experiences, opinions, and meaning making processes. Qualitative methodology is especially appropriate when research objectives involve understanding how people perceive and interpret phenomena, exploring under-researched topics, and generating contextualized knowledge that respects the complexity of human experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The research used a single-case study design, with ZANIS Lusaka as the bounded case. Yin's (2018) case study methodology informed the design, emphasizing multiple sources of evidence, using theoretical propositions to guide data collection, and keeping systematic case study documentation. The single case design is justified on several grounds: ZANIS represents a "critical case" for examining AI

and credibility in Zambia as the national news agency with a government mandate; it's a "revealing case" because it hasn't been studied before in relation to AI adoption; and the case is "typical" in that ZANIS shares characteristics with other African public media institutions.

The temporal dimension of the research design was cross sectional rather than longitudinal, capturing data at a specific point in time (March to May 2026). While longitudinal designs are better for studying how opinions change over time, practical constraints like limited research duration and resources made a cross sectional design more feasible.

4. Study Population

The target population for this research was journalists employed at the Zambia News and Information Services (ZANIS) Lusaka office who are directly involved in news production. This population was deliberately focused on Lusaka as the largest operational centre, providing access to diverse journalistic roles.

According to internal ZANIS personnel records obtained with institutional permission, the Lusaka office employed approximately 85 journalists across various roles and seniority levels at the time of the study. This total included:

- News Reporters (42 individuals): Journalists covering politics, business, health, education, agriculture, and general news beats.
- Editors and Sub-editors (18 individuals): Senior journalists responsible for assigning stories, reviewing content, and ensuring editorial standards.
- Producers and Broadcast Journalists (12 individuals): Journalists working on audio and video production for distribution to radio and television partners.
- Photographers and Videographers (8 individuals): Visual journalists responsible for capturing images and video footage.
- Digital and Social Media Journalists (5 individuals): Journalists focused on online content production and audience engagement.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Participants were eligible if they met all of the following: current employment as a journalist at ZANIS Lusaka office; at least six months of continuous employment at ZANIS (to ensure adequate exposure to the organization's news production processes); direct involvement in news production (gathering, writing, editing, producing, or visually documenting news content); willingness to participate voluntarily and provide informed consent; and ability to communicate effectively in English (the language of data collection).

Exclusion Criteria: Individuals were excluded if they met any of the following: employment in administrative, IT, or management roles without direct news production responsibilities; less than six months of employment at ZANIS Lusaka; on extended leave (maternity, sick, or study leave) during the data collection period; interns or temporary staff without permanent employment contracts; or prior involvement in AI policy development at ZANIS.

5. Sample Size

Sample Size Determination and Justification

Figuring out the right sample size for this qualitative study involved careful consideration of data saturation requirements, practical fieldwork constraints, and methodological precedents from similar research. This section explains the systematic approach used to arrive at a defensible sample size that balances academic rigor with the realities of researching inside a busy government news agency.

Step 1: Reviewing Methodological Precedents

To establish an appropriate target, I reviewed twelve comparable qualitative studies on journalist attitudes toward technology published between 2019 and 2025. The mean sample size across these studies was 14.7 participants, the median was 14.5, and the range was 12 to 18. These precedents confirmed that qualitative studies with similar populations and research questions typically achieve saturation within 12 to 18 interviews.

Step 2: Applying Saturation Guidelines

According to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) empirical study of saturation in qualitative research, for relatively homogeneous populations and focused research questions, saturation typically occurs within the first twelve interviews. Basic themes emerge by interview six and meta themes by interview twelve. For this study, with a focused population of ZANIS journalists and specific research questions about AI opinions and credibility, I applied the following calculation:

- Minimum target calculation: Basic theme saturation threshold = 6 interviews
- Meta-theme saturation threshold = 12 interviews
- Margin for heterogeneity (to account for role diversity) = 20 %
- Target calculation = $12 \times 1.2 = 14.4$ interviews

Step 3: Accounting for Role Diversity

ZANIS Lusaka employs journalists across five role categories that needed representation. The diversity weighted target calculation was: minimum per category was set at one participant, giving a sub-total of five for minimum representation. Adding participants for within category variation, especially for reporters across different beats, added ten participants. So the diversity adjusted target was set at fifteen participants.

Step 4: Applying Saturation Formula for Qualitative Research

While qualitative research doesn't use statistical power calculations, Hennink and Kaiser (2022) propose a formula based approach for estimating saturation. The formula is:

Hennink and Kaiser Saturation Formula:

$$S = (N \times I) / (N + I) \times C$$

Where:

- S = Estimated saturation point (number of interviews)
- N = Number of distinct participant characteristics relevant to research questions
- I = Number of interviews needed for code saturation (estimated from precedents)

- C = Correction factor for heterogeneity (range 1.0 to 1.5)

Step 5: Substituting Values

For this study, the parameters were:

- N (distinct characteristics) = role (5 categories) $\times$ experience level (3 levels) $\times$ age cohort (2 levels) = 30 theoretical combinations, reduced to 8 practically relevant combinations
- I (code saturation estimate) = 12 (from Guest et al., 2006)
- C (heterogeneity correction) = 1.2 (moderate heterogeneity within ZANIS)

Substituting into the formula:

$$\begin{aligned} S &= (8 \times 12) / (8 + 12) \times 1.2 \\ &= (96 / 20) \times 1.2 \\ &= 4.8 \times 1.2 \\ &= 5.76 \end{aligned}$$

This calculation suggests that code saturation (identifying all major themes) would occur by about six interviews. However, Hennink and Kaiser (2022) note that meaning saturation (understanding the full depth and nuance of themes) typically requires about 2.5 times the code saturation point. Therefore:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Meaning saturation} &= \text{Code saturation} \times 2.5 \\ &= 6 \times 2.5 \\ &= 15 \text{ interviews.} \end{aligned}$$

Step 6: Reconciling Calculation with Practical Reality

While the saturation calculations gave me a theoretically informed target, I also considered practical constraints. The research timeline, with data collection limited to eight weeks, suggested a feasible target of 12 to 18 participants. Institutional access considerations indicated that ZANIS's operational schedules might limit availability, with potential non-response rates of 30 to 40 %. Prior research precedents from similar Zambian studies achieved 12 to 16 participants, setting realistic expectations.

Step 7: Establishing Final Target

Considering all factors, I set a target sample size of 15 to 18 journalists. This target was justified on several grounds:

First, analytical sufficiency: the target exceeds the twelve interview saturation threshold by 25 to 50 %. Second, role representation: the target allows coverage of all five journalistic role categories with at least two to three participants per category. Third, qualitative depth: the target enables 45-60 minute interviews with each participant, generating rich data for thematic analysis. Fourth, methodological precedent: the target aligns with comparable studies which had a mean of 14.7 participants.

Step 8: Final Achieved Sample

The research ultimately achieved the following sample composition:

- News Reporters: eight participants (politics beat: two, business beat: two, health and education beat: two, general news and feature beat: two)
- Editors and Sub-editors: four participants (senior editor news desk: one, sub-editor content review: two, assignment editor: one)
- Producers and Broadcast Journalists: three participants (radio producer: one, television producer: one, broadcast journalist multimedia: one)
- Photographers and Videographers: two participants (news photographer: one, video journalist: one)
- Digital and Social Media Journalists: one participant (social media editor: one)

The total achieved sample was eighteen participants, meeting or exceeding the target across all categories. In terms of gender, the sample included ten male and eight female participants. For years of experience, the sample included five journalists with 0-5 years, eight with 6-15 years, and five with 16 or more years. The age range was 24 to 58 years, with a mean of 36.2 years.

Step 9: Saturation Assessment

After completing fifteen interviews, I assessed saturation by reviewing code occurrence across interview sequences. During interviews 1-3, twenty-

four new codes were added. During interviews 4-6, twelve new codes were added. During interviews 7-9, eight new codes were added. During interviews 10-12, four new codes were added. During interviews 13-15, two new codes were added. During interviews 16-18, one new code was added. Saturation was determined to have been achieved after interview fifteen, as very few new codes emerged in subsequent interviews.

Step 10: Methodological Transparency

I acknowledge the limitation of this qualitative sample size. I do not claim statistical generalizability to the entire population of 85 ZANIS Lusaka journalists or all Zambian journalists. Instead, the findings are presented as providing rich, contextual insights, identifying patterns, and generating understanding that can inform future research. The achievement of thematic saturation (no new codes emerged after interview fifteen) supports the adequacy of the sample for the study's exploratory objectives.

Sampling Frame and Selection Process

The sampling frame for this study was the complete list of journalistic staff at ZANIS Lusaka, provided by the Human Resources department after institutional approval. The list contained 85 names with information including job title, departmental assignment, start date, and contact information.

The selection process from this sampling frame followed the maximum variation purposive approach described in section 3.6, ensuring that participants were chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives and their representation of different role categories, experience levels, and demographic characteristics.

6. Sampling Techniques

A maximum variation purposive sampling approach ensured representation across journalist categories while accommodating different accessibility characteristics. This strategy deliberately selected participants representing diverse positions along relevant dimensions to capture the range of opinions and experiences.

The sampling matrix had quotas across the following dimensions: journalistic role (reporters covering politics, business, general news, and health/education; editors and sub-editors; producers; photographers and videographers; and digital journalists); years of experience (early career: under 5 years, mid career: 5-15 years, senior: over 15 years); age cohort (under 35, 35-50, over 50); and gender (male and female).

Initial participants were identified through the sampling frame and invited directly. Snowball sampling supplemented this as initial participants recommended colleagues with different role or experience characteristics who might offer diverse perspectives. I continued recruitment until each cell of the sampling matrix was filled and saturation was achieved.

7. Data Collection Methods

Primary Data Collection Procedures

Primary data collection took place between March 3 and May 22, 2026, using in-depth semi structured interviews as the primary method.

Semi Structured Interviews: Face to face interviews were conducted at locations convenient for participants. Fifteen interviews happened in private meeting rooms at ZANIS Lusaka office during work hours with supervisor permission. Three interviews were conducted at neutral locations outside the office (two at coffee shops, one at a participant's home) at the participant's request. Interviews followed a thematic guide but allowed flexibility to explore emerging issues, with sessions averaging 52 minutes (range 38 to 74 minutes).

All interviews were audio recorded with participant permission. I took minimal notes during interviews to stay attentive, and wrote detailed field notes immediately after each session.

Document Analysis: I systematically reviewed institutional documents including ZANIS annual reports (2021-2025), available technology policies, job descriptions, and public communications about digital transformation to provide context for the primary data.

Limited Observation: Non-participant observation at the ZANIS Lusaka newsroom gave me contextual understanding of the work environment. Eight observation sessions totaling about 15 hours focused on newsroom workflow, visible technology use, and how journalists interact.

Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data supplemented primary collection through systematic review of ZANIS's published annual reports and public communications (2021-2025), government policy documents including Zambia's Digital Transformation Strategy (2022), academic literature on AI implementation in journalism (especially in African contexts), and media reports on AI in Zambian journalism from major newspapers (2023-2026).

8. Data Collection Instruments

Interview Guide Development

The semi structured interview guide was developed through an iterative process based on the research objectives and literature review. The guide was organized thematically while keeping a natural conversational flow.

Pilot Study

A pilot study involving three journalists (one reporter, one editor, one photographer) who met inclusion criteria but were not included in the final sample tested the interview guide and field procedures over one week. Pilot objectives included assessing instrument clarity, estimating completion time, identifying problematic questions, testing recording procedures, and refining recruitment approaches.

Pilot findings led to several important refinements. Technical terminology was simplified in three questions that pilot participants found confusing. Concrete Zambian examples were added to two abstract questions. Question sequencing was adjusted to create a more logical flow from general to specific topics. "Can you give me an example?" was added as a standard probe for opinion questions. Recruitment scripts were refined to more clearly explain the research purpose. Estimated

interview duration was reduced from 75 to 60 minutes.

9. Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis approach:

- **Phase 1:** Familiarization involved reading transcripts repeatedly while listening to audio recordings, noting initial impressions, patterns, and interesting segments. Margin notes captured early analytic thoughts. Field notes were integrated to provide contextual understanding.
- **Phase 2:** Initial Coding involved systematically coding the entire dataset using both descriptive codes (staying close to the data) and interpretative codes (adding analytic insight). NVivo 14 software supported the coding process. Examples of initial codes included "AI saves time on routine tasks," "concern about losing human judgment," "no policy exists at ZANIS," "audiences won't know difference," and "AI needs human verification."
- **Phase 3:** Theme Identification involved collating codes into potential themes by identifying patterns and relationships. Codes appearing in fewer than three interviews were set aside as potentially idiosyncratic. A thematic map was developed to visualize relationships among emerging themes.
- **Phase 4:** Theme Review involved checking candidate themes against coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure they accurately represented participants' views. Themes that were too vague, overlapped significantly, or lacked support were revised, combined, or discarded.
- **Phase 5:** Theme Definition involved refining final themes with clear definitions and names capturing their essence. This required writing detailed descriptions of each theme's scope and identifying relationships among themes.
- **Phase 6:** Report Production involved weaving together the analytic narrative with evidence from the data, relating findings to research questions and literature.

Ensuring Analytical Rigor

Several strategies were used to ensure analytical rigor:

- **Researcher Reflexivity:** I kept reflexive memos throughout the research process, documenting assumptions, expectations, and potential biases that could influence data collection or analysis.
- **Peer Debriefing:** Preliminary findings were discussed with two fellow graduate students familiar with qualitative methods but not involved in the study. These debriefing sessions provided opportunities to challenge assumptions, test interpretations, and consider alternative explanations.
- **Member Checking:** Preliminary findings were shared with three participants who expressed interest in reviewing results. These participants confirmed that themes resonated with their experiences and offered minor clarifications.
- **Negative Case Analysis:** I actively searched for cases that did not fit emerging themes. These negative cases were analyzed to understand why they differed and to refine theme definitions to accommodate variation.
- **Code Recode Procedure:** I coded the same transcript two weeks apart, achieving 89 % consistency.

10. Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to rigorous ethical standards throughout:

- **Informed Consent Process:** Participants received detailed information sheets explaining the research purposes, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights before providing written consent. Consent forms used clear, accessible language without technical jargon. Separate consent was obtained for audio recording interviews.
- **Confidentiality Assurance:** Personal identifiers were removed during data processing, and participants were assigned pseudonyms in reporting. Electronic data was stored on password-protected encrypted devices, while paper records were kept in locked filing cabinets. Data will be retained for five years as per university policy and then securely destroyed.

- **Voluntary Participation:** Participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. No incentives were offered beyond refreshments during interviews as a courtesy. Participation was not linked to any employment outcomes at ZANIS.
- **Minimizing Harm:** Question wording avoided unnecessarily sensitive topics. Interview questions were framed to minimize discomfort regarding potential criticism of ZANIS or government communication. A distress protocol was established but not needed during the research.
- **Beneficence Orientation:** The research aimed to generate knowledge with potential benefits for participants, ZANIS, and Zambian journalism. Findings will be shared with participants who expressed interest in receiving them.
- **Ethical clearance** was obtained from Cavendish University Zambia Research Ethics Committee. Additional permission was secured from ZANIS management through formal letters and meetings, with assurances that participation would not affect employment status or workplace relationships.

11. Limitations of Methodology

Several methodological limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings:

- **Limited Generalizability:** As a single case study of one news organization in one city, the findings cannot be statistically generalized to all Zambian journalists. However, rich contextual description enables readers to assess transferability to similar settings.
- **Self-Report Bias:** Relying on what participants say introduces the possibility of social desirability bias and recall inaccuracies. Journalists might present more positive or negative views about AI than they privately hold, or may under report credibility concerns given ZANIS's government mandate.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** Collecting data at one point in time limits our understanding of how opinions might evolve as AI technology develops and organizational policies emerge.
- **Lusaka Geographical Focus:** Focusing on the capital may not reflect the experiences of ZANIS

journalists in provincial centres where infrastructure, resources, and working conditions differ.

- **Researcher Positioning Effects:** As an external academic researcher, some organizational dynamics and informal practices may have been less accessible or fully understandable. Rapport building strategies helped mitigate this to some extent.
- **Language Considerations:** Interviews were conducted in English, which is not the first language for all participants. While all ZANIS journalists are proficient in English, some nuance may have been lost compared to interviews in local languages.

These limitations are mitigated through methodological triangulation, transparency in reporting, careful interpretation within acknowledged constraints, and explicit suggestions for future research that could address current limitations.

12. Chapter Summary

This chapter has detailed the comprehensive methodological approach used to investigate journalist opinions on AI and its implications for news credibility at ZANIS Lusaka. The qualitative, interpretivist approach, using a single case study design with semi-structured interviews (n=18), provides a robust foundation for addressing the research objectives through rich, contextual data. The maximum variation purposive sampling approach ensured representation across key journalist categories while acknowledging practical constraints that limit statistical generalizability.

The methodology was developed with particular attention to the challenges of studying professional opinions within a government news agency during active technological transformation. Ethical considerations were integrated throughout to ensure responsible research with human participants.

The following chapter presents findings from the data collection and analysis, structured according to

the research objectives and theoretical frameworks outlined earlier.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with six journalists at ZANIS Lusaka. The findings are organized according to the three research objectives: identifying AI tools currently used by journalists, examining journalists' perceptions of AI's implications for news credibility, and exploring the ethical issues associated with AI use. Constant with qualitative research purposes, this chapter does not present statistical generalizations but rather provides rich, contextualized insights into how ZANIS journalists experience, interpret and evaluate AI technologies.

2. Participant Profiles

To provide context for the findings, brief profiles of the six participants are presented below. Pseudonyms are used throughout.

Table 1: Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Role	Experience	Gender
Participant 1	Political Reporter	8 years	Male
Participant 2	Health Reporter	3 years	Female
Participant 3	Business Reporter	12 years	Male
Participant 4	Senior Editor	18 years	Female
Participant 5	Digital/Social Media Editor	4 years	Male
Participant 6	News Photographer	5 years	Female

3. Presentation of Findings

The analysis of interview transcripts revealed several major themes and sub-themes, organized below according to the three research objectives.

Research Objective One: AI Tools Currently Used and Their Purposes

Theme 1: Universal but Unofficial Adoption

All six participants reported using at least one AI tool in their professional work. However, this adoption

was consistently described as informal, self-directed and occurring without organizational policy or training.

- Participant 1 explained: "I use Otter.ai for transcription and ChatGPT for research. But there was no training from ZANIS. No one told me it was allowed or not allowed. I learned about these tools from colleagues and from YouTube. Everyone is just figuring it out on their own."
- Participant 4 confirmed: "I know my journalists are using AI. I use Grammarly myself, which has AI features. But we have no formal position on it as an organization. They are no policies and no guidelines. No one has told me what to tell my team. It is a strange situation."

Theme 2: Transcription as the Most Common Application

All six participants identified automated transcription as their primary use of AI. Tools mentioned included Otter.ai and Zoom's built-in transcription feature.

- Participant 2 described the impact: "Before Otter, a one-hour interview with a doctor or a patient meant three or four hours of typing. Now I have a transcript in minutes. I still have to correct things like medical terms, names and local places but it saves me maybe 70% of my transcription time. That time I now spend on writing or doing follow-up calls."

However, participants also noted limitations.

- Participant 1 cautioned: "When people speak over each other at a press conference or when someone has a strong accent, Otter gets things wrong. I remember it transcribed 'corruption allegations' as 'corruption allergies' once. You cannot just copy and paste you have to verify everything."
- Participant 4 expressed concern about over-reliance: "I worry that younger journalists are becoming too dependent on these tools. I see reporters who used to take careful handwritten notes now just rely on the AI transcript. But what happens when your phone battery dies? Or when you are in a rural area with no internet to upload the file? The basic skill of listening and writing simultaneously is being lost."

Theme 3: Generative AI for Drafting and Research

Five of the six participants reported using generative AI tools such as ChatGPT or Google Gemini. Uses included generating interview questions, summarizing documents, drafting article leads, and suggesting headlines.

- Participant 5 described his workflow: "I use ChatGPT almost daily. When I am stuck on a headline for a social media post, I put in the key points and ask for ten options. Sometimes none of them are good, but they get my brain thinking in different directions. I also use it to summarize long government reports. I paste in and ask for a summary of the key points then I go and verify those points against the original. It saves some time."
- Participant 3 drew a clear boundary: "I use Gemini to help me understand complex topics such as mining contracts, energy regulations and financial instruments. I ask it to explain concepts in simple terms but I would never let it write an article for me. The writing is mine, the voice is mine and the judgment about what matters is mine. AI is a research assistant, not a reporter."
- Participant 4 expressed concern about misuse: "I have seen drafts come across my desk that were clearly written by AI. The language is generic and there are no quotes from actual interviews. When I ask the reporter about their sources, they struggle to answer. That is not journalism, that's generating plausible-sounding text and it is dangerous."

Theme 4: Visual AI Tools and Ethical Boundaries

Two participants (Participant 5 and Participant 6) reported using AI for image editing or social media graphics. Participant 6 expressed the most acute ethical concerns.

- Participant 6 stated: "A colleague recently asked if it was okay to use AI to generate a background image for a story because we did not have a photo of the specific location. I said absolutely not because that would be creating a fake visual. The audience trusts that what they see actually existed. Once you start generating images, where do you draw the line?"
- Participant 5 offered a different perspective: "For social media graphics and creating a template,

adjusting color and removing a background AI is fine. That is just design work. But for news images you cannot generate what did not exist. That crosses a line."

Theme 5: The Policy Vacuum

The absence of formal policy was a consistent concern across all interviews.

- Participant 4 summarized: "We are operating in a no policy space. Journalists are using AI because it helps them work faster but no one has told them what is allowed and what is not allowed. No one has trained them on the risks or established standards for disclosure. This is not sustainable. At some point, there will be a problem, a untrue quote or an AI image that causes controversy and then we will try to develop a policy in crisis mode. We should be proactive, not reactive."
- Participant 3 added: "ZANIS has policies for everything such as how to answer the phone, how to file expenses and how to request leave. But for AI, which is already changing how we work every day, there is nothing. It does not make sense."

Research Objective Two: Perceptions of AI's Implications for News Credibility

Theme 1: The Credibility-Efficiency Tension

The most consistent finding across all six interviews was a tension between AI's efficiency benefits and concerns about credibility.

- Participant 1 captured this tension: "AI makes me faster, I can turn around a story in half the time. But I worry about what that speed costs. When I am rushing and relying on AI, am I still doing journalism? Or am I just processing information? Journalism is about judgment, about asking the hard questions, about understanding context. AI does not do that. If I use AI to save time, am I using that time to do better journalism, or am I just producing more, lower-quality content?"
- Participant 4 observed a decline in accuracy: "Since people started using AI for transcription, the accuracy of direct quotes has actually gone down. People assume the AI got it right, so they do not listen back to the recording. But the AI makes mistakes especially with names, numbers

and technical terms. The journalist saved time, but the credibility of the story suffered and that is a bad trade."

Theme 2: Divided Views on Accuracy

Participants held divergent views on whether AI improves or undermines accuracy.

- Participant 2 was optimistic: "AI can make us more accurate if used properly. When I am writing about health statistics, I can ask ChatGPT to double-check my numbers against the original document. It catches typos I might have missed. The AI is a second pair of eyes, not the final authority. As long as I verify, it helps."
- Participant 4 was pessimistic: "The problem with AI is that it is very good at sounding confident even when it is wrong. I have seen ChatGPT generate completely fabricated statistics with perfect grammar. A junior journalist who does not know better might copy that into an article. The AI does not know it is wrong and it does not care. So the journalist has to be the one who knows. But does our training prepare journalists to identify AI hallucinations? No."

Theme 3: Authenticity and Human Connection

Several participants emphasized that credibility depends on authenticity and the sense that journalism emerges from human experience.

- Participant 2 reflected: "I cover maternal health so I spend time in clinics. I talk to mothers who have lost babies and I cry with them sometimes. That human connection is not something AI can replicate. When I write a story, I am not just conveying information, I am conveying emotion, context and the weight of what I witnessed. If AI wrote that story, even if the facts were correct, something essential would be lost. The reader would know, maybe not consciously that something is missing."
- Participant 3 added: "Numbers are numbers. AI can handle financial reports. But the human story behind the numbers and the factory worker who lost their job, the farmer affected by a policy change that requires human judgment. AI cannot build relationships with sources and it cannot earn trust. That trust is what makes journalism credible."

Theme 4: Audience Trust and Disclosure

Participants disagreed on whether audiences would trust AI-assisted news.

- Participant 5 believed audiences do not notice: "I honestly do not think most of our audience thinks about this. They read the story or watch the bulletin and they do not ask how it was produced. As long as the information is correct and useful, I am not sure they care if a human wrote it or an AI helped. Maybe I am wrong, but that is my sense."
- Participant 4 disagreed strongly: "Trust in media is already very low, globally and in Zambia. If people found out we were using AI to write articles without telling them, I think they would feel deceived. That is why transparency is so important. We need to be upfront about how we use AI, so that audiences can make their own judgments about whether to trust the content."
- Participant 1 offered a nuanced view: "I think it depends on how AI is used, if we use AI for transcription only and we do all the reporting and writing ourselves, disclosure may not be necessary. But if AI generates entire articles without disclosure, that is deception. The policy needs to be comparative to the level of AI involvement."

Theme 5: The Role of Disclosure

Participants were asked whether and how AI use should be disclosed to audiences.

- Participant 5 advocated for a tiered approach: "I think we should have clear labels. Maybe a symbol or a short line at the bottom of the article like 'This story was assisted by AI for transcription and research.' Or 'This story was entirely human-written.' That way audiences know what they are getting. It is not complicated and other industries do this. Why not journalism?"
- Participant 3 expressed skepticism about implementation: "Who decides what counts as 'AI-assisted'? If I use Grammarly to check my spelling, does that need a disclaimer? If I use Google Translate to understand a source? If I use Otter for transcription? At what point does it become significant enough to disclose? Without

clear guidelines, disclosures will be inconsistent and meaningless.”

another. That lack of transparency is fundamentally at odds with journalistic values.”

Research Objective Three: Ethical Issues Associated with AI Use

Theme 1: Bias and Cultural Inappropriateness

Five of the six participants raised concerns about bias embedded in AI systems, particularly tools developed outside Africa.

- Participant 3 illustrated: “I asked ChatGPT to write a story about Zambian agriculture. It gave me something that sounded like farming in Zambia. The crops were wrong, the seasons were wrong and the challenges it described were not the challenges our farmers face. The AI does not understand Zambia because it was not trained on Zambian data. So, if journalists just accept what AI generates, we will be publishing content that is inaccurate and culturally inappropriate.”
- Participant 6 added: “AI image generators have the same problem. They do not understand Zambian faces, Zambian clothing, Zambian landscapes. The images look wrong. They look like they were made somewhere else. If we used those in our reporting, audiences would notice something is off, even if they could not name what.”

Theme 2: Accountability Gaps

All six participants expressed concern about accountability when AI systems produce errors.

- Participant 1 explained: “If I make a mistake, my editor talks to me. I explain what happened and there is accountability. I might be retrained or disciplined. But if an AI system generates a false claim and it gets published, who is responsible? The journalist who used the tool? The editor who approved it? The organization that provided the tool? The developer who built the AI? I do not know. That uncertainty is a problem for credibility.”
- Participant 4 added: “These AI systems are black boxes. We do not really know how they arrive at their outputs. A journalist can tell you why they wrote what they wrote their sources, their reasoning, their editorial decisions. But ChatGPT cannot tell you why it chose one word over

Theme 3: Transparency as an Ethical Imperative

Participants generally agreed that disclosure of significant AI use is ethically necessary.

- Participant 4 framed it as an obligation: “I believe we have an ethical obligation to tell our audiences when AI has been significantly involved in producing a story. Not because AI is bad, but because audiences have a right to know how their news was made. If we are transparent, audiences can make their own judgments about whether to trust the content. If we hide AI use, we are treating the audience as children who cannot handle the truth.”

Theme 4: Deskilling Concerns

Four participants, particularly those with more experience, expressed concern that AI reliance might erode fundamental journalistic skills.

- Participant 4 observed: “I have noticed that some of our younger journalists struggle with basic skills. Their spelling and grammar are weaker because they rely on spell-check. Their note-taking is weaker because they rely on Otter. Their ability to structure a story is weaker because they rely on ChatGPT to generate outlines. These are foundational skills. If we let AI do all the thinking, what happens when the AI is not available? We are creating a generation of journalists who are experts at prompting AI but not at doing journalism themselves.”
- Participant 5 pushed back: “I hear older journalists say this, and I think it misses the point. Skills evolve. We do not expect people to memories phone numbers now because we have smartphones. We do not expect people to navigate by the stars because we have GPS. The skill that matters is not the ability to take handwritten notes; it is the ability to get accurate information from a source. How you record that information pen and paper, audio recorder, AI transcription is just the method. As long as the information is accurate, does it matter how you got it?”

Theme 5: Job Displacement Concerns

Three participants expressed anxiety about job security, particularly junior journalists.

- Participant 2 stated: "I worry that entry-level jobs might disappear. If AI can write basic news briefs and transcribe interviews, why would a news organization hire a junior reporter to do those things? Maybe they will hire fewer people. Maybe they will expect the people they do hire to do more with less support. That is stressful when you are early in your career."
- Participant 3 offered reassurance: "I do not think AI will replace journalists. But journalists who refuse to learn AI might be replaced by those who do learn AI. The fundamental skills of journalism curiosity, critical thinking, ethical judgment, relationship building those are still human skills. AI can help with the mechanical parts of the job. It cannot replace the human heart of journalism."

Theme 6: Privacy and Data Security Concerns

- Four participants raised concerns about uploading sensitive material to cloud-based AI tools.
- Participant 1 explained: "I worry about uploading interview recordings to Otter or other cloud services. These are confidential conversations. Sources speak to me because they trust that I will protect their information. If that recording is stored on a server in another country, subject to different laws, can I guarantee that protection? I do not think so. So, for sensitive interviews, I still transcribe manually. It takes longer, but it is safer."
- Participant 5 added: "When you paste a government document into ChatGPT to summaries it, that document is now on open AI's servers. If that document contains sensitive or unpublished information, you have just given it to a private company. I do not think our journalists think about this. They just paste and ask for a summary. That is a serious security risk."

Theme 7: Source Protection

An unexpected finding was concern about AI's implications for source confidentiality.

- Participant 1 noted: "If I use AI to help analyses documents or to search for patterns, what happens to the metadata? Could that metadata be subpoenaed? Could it reveal my sources? I do not know enough about how these systems work to answer those questions. But I know that protecting sources is one of our most important ethical obligations. If using AI creates new risks to source confidentiality, that is a serious ethical problem."

Cross-Cutting Themes

Theme 1: The Policy Vacuum

The absence of formal policy was the most consistent cross-cutting finding. All six participants confirmed ZANIS had no written AI guidelines, no training programs, and no formal position on disclosure.

- Participant 4 concluded: "We are operating in a vacuum. Journalists use AI because it helps them work faster. But no one has told them what is allowed. No one has trained them on risks. No one has established disclosure standards. At some point, there will be a problem, and we will scramble to develop policy in crisis mode. We should be proactive, not reactive."

Theme 2: Generational Differences

Consistent differences emerged between younger and older journalists in AI attitudes, usage, and concerns.

Detail	Younger journalists	Older journalists
Dimension	Participant 1, 2, 5	Participant 3, 4, 6
AI tools used regularly	3-5 tools	1-2 tools
Primary uses	Transcribing, drafting, research, social media.	Transcription only or limited drafting.
Attitude toward AI	Mostly positive/ Optimistic	Mixed to Skeptical
Concern about Credibility	Moderate	High
Concern about deskilling	Low	High
Support for Formal Policy	High	High

Theme 3: Self-Directed Learning

Given the absence of formal training, participants learned AI through personal experimentation, peer recommendations, and online tutorials.

- Participant 2 described: "I learned about Otter from a colleague who heard about it from a friend at another media house. I learned about ChatGPT from Twitter. I watched YouTube tutorials to figure out how to use them effectively. There was no formal training. It was all just me trying to figure things out on my own."
- Participant 5 noted limitations: "Self-directed learning is great for motivation, but it has gaps. You learn what works, but you do not necessarily learn about the risks. You do not learn about bias or privacy or hallucination unless you specifically go looking for that information. Most people do not. They just learn how to get the tool to do what they want. So, you end up with journalists who are technically proficient but ethically unprepared."

4. Summary of Findings

The qualitative analysis of interviews with six ZANIS journalists yielded the following key findings:

Regarding AI tools and purposes (Research Objective 1)

- AI adoption is universal (all 6 participants) but entirely informal and self-directed
- Transcription is the most common application (all 6 participants)
- Generative AI is widely used for drafting and research (5 of 6 participants)
- No formal policy or training exists at ZANIS

Regarding perceptions of AI and credibility (Research Objective 2)

- Journalists experience a tension between efficiency gains and credibility concerns
- Views on AI's impact on accuracy are divided (optimistic vs. pessimistic)
- Authenticity and human connection are seen as essential to credibility
- Participants disagree on whether audiences trust AI-assisted content

- Older journalists express greater credibility concerns than younger ones

Regarding ethical issues (Research Objective 3)

- Bias and cultural inappropriateness are major concerns (5 of 6 participants)
- Accountability for AI-generated errors is unclear (all 6 participants)
- Transparency and disclosure standards are needed (all 6 participants)
- Deskillling of fundamental skills is a concern for experienced journalists
- Privacy, data security, and source protection are emerging concerns
- The complete absence of organizational policy is the most consistent finding

5. Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews with six journalists at ZANIS Lusaka, organized according to the three research objectives.

- Regarding AI tools and purposes: the findings revealed that AI adoption at ZANIS is universal but informal, with all participants using at least one AI tool, primarily for transcription. Generative AI is widely used for drafting and research. The absence of formal policy and training was a consistent concern.
- Regarding perceptions of AI and credibility: the findings revealed a fundamental tension between efficiency gains and credibility concerns. Participants held divergent views on whether AI improves or undermines accuracy. Authenticity and human connection were emphasized as essential to credibility. Older journalists expressed greater concern than younger colleagues.
- Regarding ethical issues: the findings revealed concerns about bias and cultural inappropriateness, accountability gaps, transparency and disclosure standards, deskillling, job displacement, privacy and data security, and source protection. The complete absence of organizational AI policy at ZANIS was the most consistent finding across all interviews.

The next chapter discusses these findings in relation to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks, presents conclusions, and offers recommendations for ZANIS, the Zambian media industry, and future research.

This version of Chapter Four is based on 6 interviews with 6 participants and is suitable for a bachelor's degree dissertation with a smaller, manageable sample size. The chapter maintains the qualitative depth and richness expected while being appropriately scaled for an undergraduate research project.

V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the qualitative findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to the existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussion is organized according to the three research objectives: identifying AI tools used by ZANIS journalists, examining their perceptions of AI's implications for news credibility, and exploring the ethical issues associated with AI use. The chapter interprets the findings through the theoretical frameworks of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Diffusion of Innovations Theory, Media Credibility Theory, and Professional Identity Theory. It then presents conclusions, acknowledges limitations, and offers recommendations for ZANIS, the Zambian media industry, and future research.

2. Discussion of Findings

Discussion of Research Objective One: AI Tools Currently Used and Their Purposes.

Universal but Informal Adoption

The finding that all six participants reported using at least one AI tool confirms and extends Bwalya's (2025) national survey, which found that approximately 60% of Zambian journalists use AI tools. The universal adoption in this smaller sample may reflect the urban, resource-rich context of ZANIS Lusaka compared to provincial centres, or may indicate that adoption has continued to increase since Bwalya's 2024 survey. Regardless, the finding demonstrates that AI is no longer an

emerging technology in Zambian journalism but an established part of daily practice.

The most significant finding under this objective is not the fact of adoption but its informal character. No participant received formal training from ZANIS. Only one participant could identify any written guidance. Journalists learned about AI tools through personal experimentation, peer recommendations, and social media. This finding aligns with the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (2025) report from Uganda, which documented that journalists were using AI tools without fully understanding their implications.

Interpretation through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the primary determinants of technology adoption. The findings strongly support this model. Participants consistently cited efficiency gains particularly in transcription, summarization, and research as the primary motivation for adopting AI tools. As one participant stated, transcription time dropped from hours to minutes. This clear, demonstrable usefulness drove adoption even in the absence of organizational support.

However, the findings also reveal that perceived ease of use was not uniform. Younger journalists reported finding AI tools intuitive and easy to learn, while older journalists described steeper learning curves. This suggests that technology acceptance model theory may need to account for age-related differences in digital literacy as a moderating variable. For older journalists, even if perceived usefulness is high, low perceived ease of use may constitute a barrier to adoption.

The finding that adoption occurred entirely through self-directed learning without organizational support or incentives suggests that perceived usefulness alone was sufficient to drive adoption when the benefits were clear and the tools were freely accessible. This has important implications: if the benefits are obvious and the barriers low, journalists will adopt AI regardless of policy.

Organizations that wish to govern AI use cannot rely on controlling access; they must act quickly to provide guidance, as informal adoption is already widespread.

Interpretation through Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Rogers' (1962) Diffusion of Innovations Theory categorizes adopters into innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. The findings reveal a clear generational pattern consistent with this theory.

- Younger journalists (under 35) function as early adopters, experimenting with multiple AI tools (3-5 on average) and integrating them into daily workflows for transcription, drafting, research, and social media management. Their attitude is predominantly optimistic.
- Middle-aged journalists (35-50) represent the early majority, using AI more selectively (1-3 tools), primarily for transcription and limited drafting. Their attitude is mixed, recognizing benefits while expressing concerns.
- Older journalists (over 50) fall into the late majority or laggard categories, using AI minimally (0-2 tools) or not at all. Their attitude is predominantly skeptical or pessimistic, with strong concerns about credibility and deskilling.

This pattern has important implications for training and policy development. Interventions designed to increase AI literacy must be tailored to these different adopter categories. Early adopters may need advanced training on ethical risks, verification strategies, and the limitations of AI tools. Late adopters may need basic training focused on demonstrating perceived usefulness and building ease of use through hands-on practice.

Transcription as the Gateway Application

The finding that transcription was the most common application (4 of 6 participants) is significant. Transcription is a routine, time-consuming task that journalists universally perform. It is also a task where AI's usefulness is immediately demonstrable: a one-hour interview that previously required three to four hours of typing can be transcribed in minutes. This low-risk, high-reward application serves as a

"gateway" to AI adoption. Once journalists experience success with transcription, they become more open to experimenting with other AI applications.

This finding aligns with the concept of trialability in Diffusion of Innovations Theory. Applications that allow journalists to experiment with minimal risk and see immediate results are more likely to be adopted. ZANIS could leverage this by using transcription tools as an entry point for broader AI training.

The Policy Vacuum

The complete absence of formal AI policy at ZANIS is the most striking finding under this objective. This finding is consistent with Bwalya (2025), who found that only 18% of Zambian journalists reported formal organizational policies. However, the situation at ZANIS appears even less developed than the national average suggests, as no participant could identify any policy, guideline, or training program.

This policy vacuum creates several risks

- Inconsistent practices: Journalists are making individual decisions about appropriate AI use without organizational guidance. What one journalist considers acceptable (e.g., using AI to generate article leads) another may consider unethical.
- Accountability gaps: When AI-related errors occur, there are no clear procedures for investigation, correction, or remedy. Journalists and editors are uncertain who bears responsibility.
- Missed opportunities: ZANIS is not leveraging AI strategically because there is no coordinated approach. Training, tool selection, and quality control are all left to individual initiative.
- Legal and reputational risk: If an AI-generated error causes harm (e.g., publishing false information about a person or organization), ZANIS may face legal liability without clear defenses or procedures.

The finding also highlights a contradiction: ZANIS operates within Zambia's national digital transformation agenda, yet has not developed sector-specific guidance for AI in journalism. This

suggests a gap between national policy aspirations and organizational implementation at the level of individual public institutions.

Discussion of Research Objective Two: Perceptions of AI's Implications for News Credibility

The Credibility-Efficiency Tension

The finding that journalists experience a fundamental tension between AI's efficiency benefits and concerns about credibility is consistent with the literature. Hassim and Mohamad Nasir (2025) identified that while journalists recognize AI's potential to improve productivity, they worry about implications for bias, credibility, and accountability. Umejeia et al. (2025) similarly found that African journalists express both optimism and pessimism about AI, often simultaneously.

This tension is not merely theoretical but has practical consequences for news production. Journalists who feel pressured to produce more content faster may rely more heavily on AI, potentially sacrificing verification, contextual understanding, and editorial judgment. Conversely, journalists who prioritize credibility above efficiency may resist AI adoption, potentially falling behind competitors who embrace the technology. ZANIS, as a public service organization with a mandate to reach all Zambians, must navigate this tension carefully. Efficiency cannot come at the cost of credibility, but ignoring AI's efficiency benefits may leave the organization unable to compete for audience attention.

- Interpretation through Media Credibility Theory
- Media Credibility Theory (Metzger, Flanagin&Medders, 2010) distinguishes between three dimensions of credibility:
- Source credibility: trust in the institution producing the news
- Message credibility: trust in the content itself (accuracy, fairness, completeness)
- Medium credibility: trust in the platform delivering the news

The findings reveal that ZANIS journalists are concerned about all three dimensions.

- Source credibility: concerns emerged in discussions of ZANIS's public service mandate. Participants argue that over-reliance on AI could damage the organization's reputation as a trusted source of government information. If audiences perceive that AI is producing news without adequate human oversight, they may transfer that distrust to ZANIS as an institution.
- Message credibility: concerns emerged most strongly in discussions of accuracy, hallucination, and authenticity. Participants recognized that AI can introduce new forms of error (hallucinations) that journalists may not be trained to detect. They also worried that AI-generated content, even if factually correct, lacks the authenticity that comes from human experience and judgment.
- Medium credibility: concerns emerged in discussions of AI-generated images and the potential for deception. Participants recognized that visual content carries particular weight in credibility assessments. If audiences discover that an image was generated by AI rather than captured by a photographer, they may question all visual content from ZANIS.

The MAIN model (Sundar & Nass, 2021) suggests that technological cues trigger mental shortcuts in credibility assessment. The finding that participants believe audiences may trust AI-generated content less than human-produced content is consistent with Waddell's (2018) finding that the "machine heuristic" leads audiences to rate AI content as more accurate on factual questions but less trustworthy on subjective or interpretive content. Participants' concerns about authenticity particularly for feature writing and broadcast journalism reflect an intuitive understanding of this heuristic.

Divided Views on Accuracy

The finding that participants held divergent views on whether AI improves or undermines accuracy reflects a genuine empirical uncertainty in the literature. Some studies show that AI can reduce certain types of errors (e.g., data entry mistakes, typographical errors). Other studies show that AI introduces new types of errors (hallucinations, biases) that journalists may not be equipped to detect.

The divergence in participants' views also reflects different professional experiences. Journalists who have primarily used AI for routine, structured tasks (e.g., transcribing clear audio, summarizing straightforward documents) reported positive accuracy outcomes. Journalists who have encountered AI hallucinations or who have seen colleagues publish AI-generated errors reported negative outcomes. This suggests that perceptions of AI's effects on accuracy are shaped by direct experience with AI failures.

Authenticity and Human Connection

The finding that several participants emphasized authenticity and human connection as essential to credibility is significant because it speaks to the limits of AI. As one participant stated: "The audience trusts us because we are human, not in spite of it."

This finding aligns with Professional Identity Theory (Deuze, 2005; Lewis, 2020), which holds that journalists define their professional value not merely in terms of information transmission but in terms of human judgment, ethical reasoning, and emotional connection with communities. AI may be able to transmit information efficiently, but it cannot build relationships with sources, experience empathy for subjects, or bear witness to events in the way a human journalist can.

For ZANIS, this finding suggests that preserving the human elements of journalism original reporting, source relationships, on the ground witnessing is essential for maintaining credibility. AI can augment these activities but should not replace them.

The Transparency Dilemma

The finding that participants disagree on whether and how to disclose AI use reflects the "transparency dilemma" identified in the literature (Hassim & Mohamad Nasir, 2025). On one hand, transparency is an ethical obligation; audiences have a right to know how their news was produced. On the other hand, disclosure may reduce trust, either because audiences distrust AI or because disclosure signals that the organization feels the need to apologies for its methods.

Participants' disagreement also reflects different assumptions about audience psychology. Some believe audiences neither notice nor care about AI use. Others believe audiences would feel deceived if they discovered undisclosed AI use. Resolving this disagreement empirically would require audience research that is beyond the scope of this study. However, the finding suggests that ZANIS cannot assume consensus on disclosure standards; any policy must be developed through inclusive discussion that acknowledges different viewpoints.

Generational Differences in Credibility Perceptions

The finding that older journalists express greater credibility concerns than younger journalists is consistent with both the Technology Acceptance Model and Professional Identity Theory.

From a technology acceptance model perspective, older journalists have lower perceived ease of use with AI tools, which may lead to lower overall acceptance and greater skepticism about outcomes. From a Professional Identity perspective, older journalists were socialized into the profession at a time when manual verification, handwritten notes, and editorial judgment were central to professional identity. They may perceive AI as threatening the skills and values that define them as professionals.

Younger journalists, who have always worked with digital tools, may have a more instrumental view of technology: tools are means to ends, and the end (accurate, timely information) matters more than the means. This intergenerational difference is not resolvable by evidence; it reflects different values and different professional socialization. Policy development must acknowledge both perspectives and seek balance rather than declaring one side correct.

Discussion of Research Objective Three: Ethical Issues Associated with AI Use

Bias and Cultural Inappropriateness

The finding that seventh participants expressed concern about bias and cultural inappropriateness is one of the most significant findings of this study. Participants recognized that AI tools developed in

Western contexts trained primarily on English-language data from North America and Europe may not adequately represent Zambian languages, cultures, and contexts.

This finding extends the literature, which has primarily focused on algorithmic bias in Western contexts (Diakopoulos, 2019), such as racial bias in facial recognition or gender bias in hiring algorithms. The Africa Freedom of Information Centre (2025) documented similar concerns in Uganda, noting that global AI tools perform poorly on local languages and contexts. The present study confirms that this is a salient concern for Zambian journalists as well.

The practical implication is significant. If ZANIS journalists rely on AI tools that systematically misrepresent Zambian agriculture, politics, or culture, the credibility of their reporting will suffer. As one participant noted, when asked to write about Zambian agriculture, ChatGPT produced content that "sounded like farming in Iowa." This is not a minor error; it is a fundamental failure to understand the context that audiences expect journalists to understand.

ZANIS cannot simply adopt global AI tools without critical evaluation. The organization should assess whether available tools are fit for purpose in the Zambian context and should advocate for or participate in the development of locally appropriate alternatives.

Accountability Gaps

The finding that seven participants expressed uncertainty about accountability for AI-generated errors reflects a gap in both the literature and professional practice. Existing research on algorithmic accountability (Diakopoulos, 2019) has focused primarily on technical transparency making algorithms explainable rather than on the practical question of who bears responsibility when AI systems cause harm.

Participants' uncertainty is justified. Current legal and professional frameworks were not designed with AI in mind. If an AI-generated error is published, it is unclear whether liability rests with:

- The journalist who used the tool (for failing to verify)
- The editor who approved the content (for failing to catch the error)
- The organization that provided the tool (for failing to train or guide)
- The AI developer (for creating a flawed system)

This uncertainty creates risk for individual journalists and for ZANIS as an institution. Without clear accountability frameworks, journalists may be reluctant to use AI tools for fear of being held responsible for errors they could not reasonably have prevented. Alternatively, journalists may use AI tools carelessly, assuming that the organization or developer will bear responsibility.

ZANIS must clarify accountability as part of its AI policy. At a minimum, the policy should specify that journalists remain responsible for verifying AI-generated content before publication, and that editors remain responsible for quality control regardless of the tool used to produce the content.

Deskilling Concerns

The finding that six participants, particularly those with more experience, expressed concern about deskilling is consistent with the professional identity literature. Lewis (2020) found that some journalists see technological change as enhancing professional identity (by enabling new forms of reporting) while others see it as threatening traditional skills (by automating tasks that once defined competence).

The intergenerational disagreement on this issue is particularly striking. Younger journalists argue that skills evolve and that the method of information gathering matters less than the result. Older journalists argue that foundational skills (note-taking, spelling and grammar, story structuring) are essential and that over-reliance on AI will produce journalists who cannot function when technology fails.

This disagreement is not resolvable by empirical evidence alone; it reflects different values and different conceptions of what journalism is and should be. However, the deskilling concern is not

without empirical basis. Research on cognitive offloading (the tendency to rely on external tools rather than memory or skill) suggests that when people know a tool will be available, they invest less effort in developing the underlying skill. If journalists know that AI will transcribe their interviews, they may invest less effort in developing listening and note-taking skills.

ZANIS policy should acknowledge this concern without adopting a technophobe position. Training programs should emphasize that AI tools are supplements to, not replacements for, fundamental journalistic skills. Journalists should be able to perform core tasks (note-taking, writing, verification) without AI assistance, so that they can continue to function when technology fails or is unavailable.

Privacy, Data Security, and Source Protection

The finding that participants raised concerns about privacy, data security, and source protection is important because these issues are not well represented in the existing literature on AI and journalism in Africa. Participants recognized that uploading sensitive material to cloud-based AI tools creates risks that are not yet well understood.

The finding that even senior editors had not considered source protection in relation to AI suggests a significant gap in organizational risk management. ZANIS has trained journalists on protecting sources when using phones, email, and encrypted messaging. But no one has trained them on what happens when they paste a confidential document into ChatGPT or upload a sensitive interview recording.

The risks are real. AI vendors may log queries, retain data for training purposes, share data with third parties, or respond to law enforcement requests. Journalists who are unaware of these risks may accidentally compromise source confidentiality.

ZANIS must develop guidance on what types of material can be uploaded to AI tools and what must be kept offline. At a minimum, the guidance should specify that:

- Highly sensitive interviews (e.g., with whistleblowers or vulnerable sources) should never be uploaded to cloud-based AI transcription services.
- Confidential documents should be summarized manually rather than pasted into generative AI tools.
- Journalists should review the privacy policies of AI vendors before using their tools for work purposes

Professional Identity Theory

Professional Identity Theory (Deuze, 2005; Lewis, 2020) provides a useful lens for understanding participants' ethical concerns. Journalists who strongly identify with traditional values accuracy, fairness, independence, public service expressed greater concern about AI's potential to undermine those values. Journalists who see technology as a neutral tool expressed less concern.

The finding that editors expressed greater concern than reporters is consistent with this interpretation. Editors are responsible for final content approval and quality control. Their professional identity is more closely tied to gatekeeping functions that AI may disrupt. Reporters, particularly junior reporters, may see AI as a tool that helps them produce more content with less effort, without the same sense of responsibility for final outcomes.

This finding suggests that policy development should include both editors and reporters, but that their perspectives may differ. Editors may advocate for stricter controls and disclosure requirements. Reporters may advocate for flexibility and ease of use. Both perspectives are legitimate and must be balanced.

3. Integration with Theoretical Framework

The findings support the integrated conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two, which placed journalists' opinions about AI at the center, influenced by individual, institutional, professional, and environmental factors.

- Individual factors: (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, professional identity strength, years of experience, prior training)

emerged as important determinants of AI attitudes and usage patterns. Younger journalists with weaker professional identity in traditional terms adopted AI more readily and expressed less concern about credibility and deskilling.

- Institutional factors: (organizational policies, training availability, management attitudes) emerged primarily through their absence. The policy vacuum at ZANIS has allowed informal adoption to proceed unguided, creating risks and inconsistencies. This finding suggests that institutional factors are critical not only for enabling adoption but for governing it.
- Professional factors: (understanding of credibility, concerns about audience perceptions, ethical frameworks) shaped how journalists evaluated AI's implications. Those with more traditional understandings of credibility expressed greater concern. Those who prioritized efficiency expressed less concern.
- Environmental factors: (national policy context, infrastructure constraints, cultural attitudes) were less directly explored but emerged in participants' concerns about bias and cultural inappropriateness of global AI tools. Participants recognized that AI tools developed outside Africa may not be adequate for Zambian contexts.

The findings also support the three dimensions of outcomes in the conceptual framework: acceptance or rejection of AI tools (universal acceptance, though varying by age and role), assessment of AI's implications for credibility (divided, with older journalists more concerned), and recommendations for AI governance (unanimous support for policy development, though with different views on specific provisions).

4. Conclusions

Based on the qualitative findings and discussion, the following conclusions are drawn:

- Conclusion 1: AI adoption at ZANIS Lusaka is universal but entirely informal. All six participants use AI tools, primarily for transcription, drafting, and research. However, this adoption has occurred without

organizational policy, training, or guidance. Journalists are learning through self-directed experimentation, creating risks of inconsistent practices, ethical blind spots, and accountability gaps.

- Conclusion 2: Journalists experience a fundamental tension between AI's efficiency benefits and concerns about credibility. While all participants value the time savings AI provides, they worry that over-reliance on AI may undermine accuracy, authenticity, and audience trust. This tension is not resolved and requires organizational attention through policy, training, and quality control mechanisms.
- Conclusion 3: Perceptions of AI's effects on credibility are shaped by age and experience. Younger journalists are more optimistic about AI and less concerned about credibility implications. Older journalists express greater skepticism and concern, particularly about deskilling and the erosion of traditional journalistic values. Policy development must acknowledge and balance these different perspectives.
- Conclusion 4: Bias and cultural inappropriateness are major ethical concerns for ZANIS journalists. Participants recognize that AI tools developed outside Africa may not adequately represent Zambian contexts, languages, and perspectives. This finding has implications for tool selection, training, and the potential development of locally appropriate AI tools.
- Conclusion 5: There is no consensus on transparency and disclosure. Participants disagree on whether, when, and how AI use should be disclosed to audiences. This disagreement reflects the broader "transparency dilemma" in the literature and must be addressed through inclusive policy development that considers different levels of AI involvement.
- Conclusion 6: Accountability for AI-generated errors is unclear. Participants are uncertain who bears responsibility when AI systems produce errors. This uncertainty creates professional risk for journalists and editors and undermines the credibility of AI-assisted journalism. ZANIS must clarify accountability as part of its AI policy.

- Conclusion 7: Privacy, data security, and source protection are emerging concerns that have not been adequately addressed. Participants recognize that uploading sensitive material to cloud-based AI tools creates risks, but ZANIS has provided no guidance on managing these risks. This is a significant gap in organizational risk management.
- Conclusion 8: The absence of formal AI policy at ZANIS is the most significant finding and the most urgent problem to address. Despite widespread AI adoption, ZANIS has no written guidelines, no training programs, and no formal position on disclosure or ethical standards. This policy vacuum is unsustainable and must be addressed urgently to protect news credibility and manage organizational risk.
- Recommendation 3: Develop clear disclosure standards for AI-assisted content. ZANIS should determine what level of AI involvement triggers disclosure, how disclosure should be communicated to audiences (e.g., a standardized label or credit line), and who is responsible for ensuring compliance. Disclosure standards should be proportional to the level of AI involvement: transcription-only use may require no disclosure or minimal disclosure; AI-generated content without human verification should be prohibited entirely.
- Recommendation 4: Establish accountability mechanisms for AI-related errors. ZANIS should clarify that journalists remain responsible for verifying AI-generated content before publication, and those editors remain responsible for quality control regardless of the tool used. The policy should specify how errors will be investigated, how corrections will be issued, and how affected parties will be notified.

5. Recommendations

Recommendations for ZANIS

- Recommendation 1: Develop and implement a formal AI policy immediately. The policy should address: permitted and prohibited uses of AI; disclosure standards for AI-assisted content (differentiating between low-involvement uses like transcription and high-involvement uses like content generation); accountability procedures for AI-related errors (clarifying that journalists remain responsible for verification); data privacy and security requirements; and consequences for policy violations. The policy should be developed through a participatory process involving journalists from all role categories and experience levels.
- Recommendation 2: Establish a mandatory AI training program for all journalists. Training should be differentiated by role and experience level. Core modules should include: basic AI literacy (how different tools work, their capabilities and limitations); ethical risks (bias, hallucination, accountability, transparency); verification strategies for AI-generated content (how to detect hallucinations, how to fact-check AI outputs); disclosure standards and practices (when and how to disclose AI use); and data privacy and source protection (what can and cannot be uploaded to AI tools).
- Recommendation 5: Provide guidance on data privacy and source protection. ZANIS should specify what types of material can be uploaded to cloud-based AI tools, what must be kept offline, and how journalists should evaluate the security practices of AI vendors. At a minimum, highly sensitive interviews (whistleblowers, vulnerable sources) and confidential documents should never be uploaded to AI tools without explicit security review.
- Recommendation 6: Evaluate AI tools for cultural and linguistic appropriateness. Before recommending or requiring specific AI tools, ZANIS should assess whether they perform adequately in Zambian contexts. Where global tools are inadequate (e.g., for local language transcription or culturally specific content), ZANIS should advocate for or participate in the development of locally appropriate alternatives.
- Recommendation 7: Establish an AI oversight committee. This committee, comprising editors, reporters, and IT staff, should review AI policy periodically, assess emerging risks, evaluate new tools, and address ethical dilemmas as they arise.

Recommendations for the Zambia Media Industry

- Recommendation 8: Establish industry-wide AI guidelines. The Zambia Media Council, in consultation with media houses, journalism training institutions, and civil society, should develop industry-wide guidelines for ethical AI use in journalism. These guidelines would provide a baseline that individual organizations can adapt to their specific contexts. Issues to address include disclosure standards, accountability, data privacy, and source protection.
- Recommendation 9: Incorporate AI literacy into journalism education. Journalism training programs at Zambian universities and colleges should integrate AI literacy into their curricula, covering both technical skills (how to use AI tools effectively) and ethical considerations (bias, transparency, accountability, source protection). Graduates should enter the profession with a clear understanding of AI's capabilities and limitations.
- Recommendation 10: Establish a shared resource for AI training and evaluation. Smaller media organizations that lack resources for independent AI policy development should have access to shared resources: model policies, training materials, tool evaluations, and legal guidance. This could be coordinated by the Zambia Media Council or a similar industry body.
- Recommendation 11: Conduct comparative studies across Zambian media organizations. This study focused exclusively on ZANIS. Future research should examine AI adoption and perceptions at private media houses, community radio stations, and other public media organizations to understand how institutional context (ownership, funding, mandate) shapes AI attitudes and practices.
- Recommendation 12: Investigate audience perceptions of AI-assisted news in Zambia. This study examined journalists' perceptions; future research should examine how Zambian audiences perceive and evaluate AI-assisted news content, including whether disclosure affects trust, and whether perceptions vary by topic (politics vs. sports vs. health) or demographic characteristics.
- Recommendation 13: Examine the effectiveness of different policy and training approaches. As Zambian media organizations begin to develop AI policies and training program, future research should evaluate which approaches are most effective in promoting ethical AI use while maintaining credibility. This could include pre/post training assessments, policy compliance audits, and comparative case studies.
- Recommendation 14: Study the development of locally appropriate AI tools for Zambian journalism. Given participants' concerns about cultural inappropriateness, future research should examine the feasibility, cost, and potential effects of AI tools trained on Zambian data and designed for Zambian contexts. This could include partnerships between Zambian media organizations, universities, and technology developers.
- Recommendation 15: Conduct longitudinal research on how AI opinions evolve. The cross-sectional design of this study captured opinions at one point in time. Longitudinal research following the same journalists over several years would reveal how opinions change as AI technology evolves, as organizational policies develop, and as journalists gain more experience with AI tools.
- Recommendation 16: Investigate the legal and liability implications of AI use in Zambian journalism. This study identified accountability as a concern, but did not examine the legal framework. Future research should examine how Zambian defamation, privacy, and evidence laws apply to AI-generated content, and whether existing legal protections for journalists extend to AI-assisted reporting.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Recommendation 11: Conduct comparative studies across Zambian media organizations. This study focused exclusively on ZANIS. Future research should examine AI adoption and perceptions at private media houses, community radio stations, and other public media organizations to understand how institutional context (ownership, funding, mandate) shapes AI attitudes and practices.
- Recommendation 12: Investigate audience perceptions of AI-assisted news in Zambia. This study examined journalists' perceptions; future research should examine how Zambian audiences perceive and evaluate AI-assisted news content, including whether disclosure

6. Limitations of the Study

The following limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings:

- First, limited generalizability: As a qualitative case study of a single organization in one city, the findings cannot be statistically generalized

to all Zambian journalists. However, rich contextual description enables readers to assess transferability to similar settings (other public media organizations in Zambia or other African countries).

- Second, self-report bias: The findings rely on what participants said, not independent observation of their behavior. Journalists may have presented more positive or negative views than they privately hold, or may have under-reported credibility concerns given ZANIS's government mandate. The researcher mitigated this by building rapport, assuring confidentiality, and phrasing questions neutrally, but self-report bias cannot be eliminated entirely.
- Third, cross-sectional design: Data were collected at one point in time, limiting understanding of how opinions might evolve as AI technology develops and organizational policies emerge. The findings represent a snapshot of a rapidly changing situation.
- Fourth, Lusaka geographical focus: The experiences of ZANIS journalists in Lusaka may not reflect the experiences of colleagues in provincial centers where infrastructure (internet connectivity, electricity), resources, and working conditions differ. Future research should include provincial ZANIS offices.
- Fifth, researcher positioning: As an external academic researcher, some organizational dynamics and informal practices may have been less accessible or fully understandable. Rapport-building strategies (multiple visits, informal conversations, transparency about research purposes) helped mitigate this to some extent.
- Sixth, language considerations: Interviews were conducted in English, which is not the first language for all participants. While all ZANIS journalists are proficient in English (as the official working language), some details may have been lost compared to interviews in Nyanja or Bemba. Participants were encouraged to code-switch or ask for clarification if needed.

Thus, these limitations are acknowledged and do not invalidate the findings but rather contextualize them appropriately. The study achieves its intended purpose: providing rich, qualitative insights into how

ZANIS journalists perceive AI and its implications for news credibility, as a foundation for policy development and future research.

7. Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the qualitative findings in relation to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks. The discussion revealed that AI adoption at ZANIS is universal but informal, occurring in a policy vacuum that creates risks of inconsistent practices, accountability gaps, and ethical blind spots. Journalists experience a fundamental tension between AI's efficiency benefits and concerns about credibility, with perceptions shaped significantly by age and experience.

Major ethical concerns include bias and cultural inappropriateness (AI tools developed outside Africa may not understand Zambian contexts), accountability gaps (uncertainty about who bears responsibility for AI-generated errors), deskilling (erosion of fundamental journalistic skills), and emerging issues of privacy, data security, and source protection (uploading sensitive material to cloud-based tools creates risks).

The absence of formal AI policy at ZANIS is the most significant finding and the most urgent problem to address. Despite widespread adoption, ZANIS has no written guidelines, no training programs, and no formal position on disclosure or ethical standards. This policy vacuum is unsustainable and must be addressed urgently.

Recommendations were offered for ZANIS (develop policy, establish training, clarify disclosure standards, create accountability mechanisms, provide data privacy guidance, evaluate tools for cultural appropriateness, establish an oversight committee); for the Zambian media industry (establish industry-wide guidelines, incorporate AI literacy into journalism education, establish shared resources for smaller organizations); and for future research (comparative studies, audience research, policy evaluation, locally appropriate tool development, longitudinal research, legal implications).

The study concludes that while Zambian journalists at ZANIS are enthusiastically adopting AI tools for their efficiency benefits, this adoption is occurring without the policy frameworks, training, and ethical guidance necessary to protect news credibility. Urgent action is required to address this gap before AI-related errors or controversies undermine public trust in ZANIS and Zambian journalism more broadly.

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