



The Dilemma of Communication Ethics of Deepfake Technology and Its Impact on Media Credibility

Yufei Zhang

Elite Preparatory Academy, New Jersey Campus, 452 Lakeside Blvd, Hopatcong, New Jersey
07843, USA
niancai34@gmail.com

Abstract. With the rapid development of artificial intelligence and the wide application of deep forgery technology, false audio and video content poses a severe challenge to the information dissemination order and media credibility. This paper discusses the dilemma of communication ethics caused by deep forgery technology and its impact on media credibility. It is found that deep forgery technology leads to systematic ethical anomie from three aspects: authenticity, fairness and value orientation, which seriously violates the basic norms of communication ethics by confusing facts, distorting public opinion and undermining cultural communication and social trust. At the same time, this technology impacts the core functions of media information review and agenda setting, dispels the audience's cognitive trust and triggers trust transfer, exacerbates the chaos of industry traffic, and continuously weakens the social influence of the media. The research shows that people should make concerted efforts to deal with such risks from three aspects: technical testing, media self-discipline and supervision and rule of law. This paper provides theoretical reference and practical countermeasures for preventing false information and rebuilding media trust and has practical significance for maintaining healthy communication ecology.

Keywords: Communication Ethics, Deepfake Technology, Media Credibility.

1 Introduction

With the rapid iteration of artificial intelligence technology and the maturity of Deepfake technology, it has widely penetrated into many fields such as political communication, cultural communication, public opinion, etc. It has broken the authenticity boundary of information dissemination by generating highly realistic false audio and video and text content. At present, Deepfake technology has repeatedly impacted the fields of political economy and cultural communication, which not only led to the proliferation of false information, but also gave birth to a series of communication ethics problems, which seriously dispelled the audience's trust in the media and caused an unprecedented impact on media credibility in the digital age.

Folorunsho and Boamah pointed out that Deepfake technology caused multiple ethical crises such as privacy invasion, unauthorized content synthesis, political manipu-

lation and financial fraud [1]. Barari et al. confirmed through experiments that the credibility of political Deepfake is not significantly higher than that of text or audio false information, but it will lead to a crisis of trust generalization [2]. Some scholars have pointed out that although Deepfake has positive value in the fields of entertainment and education, its negative constraints such as psychological harm and collapse of social trust far outweigh the empowerment effect, and this technology directly dispels the authenticity foundation of news media [3]. Boediman pointed out through an interdisciplinary overview that deep forgery blurs the boundary between truth and fiction, which leads to ethical dilemmas such as the proliferation of false information and privacy violations, and directly erodes the credibility of the media and the foundation of public trust [4]. Relevant research points out that the content generated by AI impacts the core principles of media ethics in the post-truth era, resulting in the collapse of authenticity, causing the audience to fall into cognitive fatigue and universal suspicion, and reconstructing the trust formation mechanism [5,6]. Based on a questionnaire survey, Nawaz and others found that 75% of the audience knew about Deepfake, but most people lacked confidence in discrimination, indicating that they had reduced their trust in journalism. The credibility of the media continues to decline, and the lack of public media literacy and poor platform audit are the main reasons [7].

From the ethical theory of information dissemination, deep forgery technology directly violates the core ethical principles such as truth, justice, transparency and harmlessness, and breaks the bottom line of authenticity and responsibility of information dissemination. The synthesis and dissemination of false audio and video constitutes a deliberate distortion of facts, infringes on individual portrait rights and reputation rights, and at the same time distorts the public information environment, leading to ethical anomie and social trust crisis.

From the perspective of media trust theory, media credibility is based on the audience's stable recognition of media authenticity, authority and responsibility. Deep forgery confuses the audience through highly realistic false content, which makes the audience fall into the cognitive dilemma of "seeing is no longer believing". Long-term exposure to forged content will make the audience form a general suspicion mentality, which will lead to the collapse of trust generalization.

Some scholars also put forward the mechanism path based on the current predicament. Shin & Lee shows that popularizing Deepfake to the audience can effectively reduce their trust and willingness to forward fake news and reveal the key role of media literacy in restoring credibility [8]. Wei Xiuzhi and others focus on the health communication scene and put forward the need to build a governance system that combines industry self-discipline, multi-coordination, legal supervision and technical ethics [9]. Zhang Jiaxin and others believe that Deepfake leads to ethical crises such as deprivation of the right to know and ecological alienation of public opinion, which seriously impacts the core credibility of journalism, and advocates rebuilding trust through four paths: legal regulation, platform governance, media professionalism and public empowerment [10]. Based on this, this paper analyzes the ethical dilemma of communication of Deepfake technology and its impact on media credibility.

2 The Dilemma of Communication Ethics Caused by Deepfake Technology

2.1 Ethical Dilemma of Authenticity

Authenticity is the basic bottom line of information dissemination and the value basis of media existence, and Deepfake technology has shaken this principle from the root. The false audio, video and text content generated by technology can hardly be distinguished by ordinary audiences visually and audibly, which makes a large number of forged information enter the public view in the form of real information. These contents seem to conform to realistic logic, but they are completely divorced from the facts themselves. In the process of communication, the boundaries between truth and fiction are constantly confused, making it difficult for the audience to judge the authenticity of information by intuitive feelings.

The spread of false information not only misleads the general public, but also affects the judgment and reporting of the media. In order to pursue the speed and flow of communication, some media directly use forged content without strict verification, which further magnifies the wrong information. Being in an information environment where it is difficult to distinguish between true and false for a long time, the audience will gradually lose their basic ability to judge information, and even take false content as a factual basis, resulting in wrong cognition. When seeing is no longer true, the authenticity foundation of information dissemination is constantly disintegrated, and the ethical bottom line of the whole industry is also loosened.

2.2 Ethical Dilemma of Authenticity

Another ethical crisis brought by Deepfake technology is reflected in the destruction of the fairness of communication. Driven by interests or manipulated by public opinion, some subjects use technology to forge specific content, deliberately guide the direction of public opinion, amplify opposing emotions, and cover up real information, thus distorting the direction of public opinion. This manipulation is not based on facts, but through technology to create illusions, so that the public can accept the designed views without knowing it, which destroys the balance and rationality of the public opinion field.

At the same time, forged information is often more impactful and topical, and it is easier to get high traffic under the recommendation of platform algorithms, which leads to the inundation of high-quality real content and the obvious unfair distribution of communication resources. Real and rigorous information needs to be verified and verified, and the dissemination speed is slow, while forged content can be generated and disseminated quickly, occupying more users' attention. This imbalance makes it difficult for professional media to obtain proper communication space for in-depth reporting and fact checking, which further aggravates the imbalance of information environment. The core of fair communication is to make information flow freely and truly, and the abuse of Deepfake technology makes this goal difficult to achieve.

2.3 Value Ethics Dilemma

The abuse of Deepfake technology will also lead to the crisis of value ethics at a deeper level, which will directly affect cultural communication and the construction of social trust. Some forged contents tamper with cultural events, distort the images of public figures, and even distort historical and cultural symbols, which makes cultural communication deviate from the real track and affects society's correct cognition of cultural values. In the long run, it will weaken the authenticity of cultural inheritance and destroy the common value base of society.

More seriously, the frequent occurrence of forged information will continuously aggravate the crisis of social trust. When the most reliable evidence in the traditional sense, such as audio and video, can be forged at will, the public will not only reduce their trust in the media, but also have widespread doubts about others, institutions and public information. This distrust will spread from online to offline, affecting interpersonal communication, social cooperation and the efficiency of public decision-making. Once social trust is destroyed, the cost of repair is extremely high, and the continuous impact brought by Deepfake is deepening the crisis of trust, which makes the whole society fall into the dilemma of cognitive confusion and value shake.

3 The Impact Mechanism of Deepfake Technology on Media Credibility

Deepfake technology, with its highly realistic synthesis ability, permeates from media function, audience trust to communication ecology, and continuously disintegrates the support system of media credibility. This impact is not a single link failure, but through multi-dimensional transmission, so that the authenticity and authority of the media, the ability to guide public opinion and social influence continue to weaken and finally shake the trust foundation of the entire industry.

3.1 Impacting the Core Function of Media

Deep forgery directly impacts the most basic information collection and audit links of the media. The recognition rate of forged audio and video by ordinary audience is low, even the recognition accuracy of professional audit team is declining. The rapid generation of massive forged content makes the traditional media verification mechanism difficult to cope with, and the audit error rate has increased significantly. A large number of unidentified false materials enter the editing process, forcing the media to invest more manpower and material resources to check the facts, and the operating costs continue to rise.

The far-reaching influence is reflected in the weakening of agenda setting and public opinion guidance function. False content spreads rapidly with the help of algorithms and often occupies the home of public opinion before the official media verifies and releases it, distorting the public's perception of events. When the media releases real information, the audience has preconceived to accept false narrative, and it is difficult

for the media to bring public attention back to the track of rational discussion, and the original stable pattern of public opinion guidance has been continuously disrupted.

3.2 Dispelling the Audience's Trust in the Media

The dissolution of cognitive trust is a direct manifestation of the decline of credibility. According to Gallup's 2025 survey, only 28% of the respondents have basic trust in the news media, the lowest level since monitoring. Reuters's digital news report also pointed out that due to factors such as deep forgery, the audience proportion of trusted media reports worldwide has dropped to 40%. The audience gradually forms a defensive mentality in the information environment where it is difficult to distinguish between true and false. Even in the face of the content published by authoritative media, they tend to question first and then judge.

This distrust further promotes the transfer of trust. More and more audiences give up the mainstream media and turn to informal channels such as media and social groups to obtain information. Although these channels lack a verification mechanism, they get more attention because they are suitable for emotional expression. When the audience no longer regards professional media as the primary source, the trust base on which the media depends continues to lose, and the credibility of the industry falls into a cycle of continuous decline.

3.3 Destroying the Ecology of Media Communication

Deep forgery has intensified the chaos of traffic competition in the media industry. Forged content is more topical and impactful, and its dissemination speed is much higher than that of rigorous reports. Some media choose to relax the auditing standards to maintain traffic and follow suit to forward unverified false information. High-quality in-depth content is constantly marginalized due to slow communication speed and low traffic revenue, and the overall content quality of the industry continues to decline.

Long-term traffic orientation and trust loss jointly weaken the social influence of the media. The role of the media in setting the tone in public events is weakening, and its ability to guide social emotions is obviously declining. The audience's professional recognition of the media is reduced, and the role of the media in policy interpretation, social supervision and cultural guidance is difficult to play effectively. When the media loses its stable credibility support, its value in social governance and public communication is weakening, and the whole communication ecology is in an unbalanced and disorderly state.

4 Strategies to Deal with the Ethical Dilemma of Deepfake Technology Communication and Maintain the Public Trust of the Media

Facing the ethical risk of communication and the crisis of media credibility caused by deep forgery technology, people need to make concerted efforts from multiple levels of

technology research and development, media self-discipline and institutional supervision to build a multi-level and systematic response system, so as to ensure technological innovation while keeping the bottom line of information truth and social trust and provide reliable support for the stable development of the media industry.

4.1 Technical Level

Continuing to promote the research and development of Deepfake detection technology is an important prerequisite to preventing the spread of false information. With the continuous refinement of forged content, the traditional manual verification has been difficult to meet the demand. Scientific research institutions and technology enterprises should increase investment and develop multi-dimensional intelligent detection tools based on image features, audio waveforms, behavior logic, etc., so as to improve the recognition accuracy and response speed of forged audio and video. Technology research and development should not only be oriented to professional institutions, but also introduce simple and easy-to-use tools to provide low-cost verification support for ordinary platforms and media. At the same time, the industry needs to standardize the direction of technology research and development and application, clarify the boundaries of technology use, and avoid using production technology in illegal scenarios such as malicious forgery and public opinion manipulation. Technology developers should take the initiative to assume social responsibility, embed ethical requirements into algorithm design, and reduce the risk from the source. At the same time, the industry needs to standardize the direction of technology research and development and application, clarify the boundaries of technology use, and avoid using production technology in illegal scenarios such as malicious forgery and public opinion manipulation. Technology developers should take the initiative to assume social responsibility, embed ethical requirements into algorithm design, and reduce the risk from the source.

4.2 Media Level

As the core link of information dissemination, the media must improve the internal information audit mechanism and strengthen the responsibility of content control. Faced with the pressure of massive information and rapid dissemination, the media should establish a multi-level fact checking process to conduct special verification on key video, audio and image materials to avoid the spread of false content due to negligence. Media practitioners need to improve their digital literacy, be familiar with the common characteristics and identification methods of deep forgery, and be cautious in all aspects of editing and publishing.

While doing a good job of internal control, the media should also strengthen the guidance to the audience and help the public improve their discriminating ability and rational cognition. The media can let the audience know the spread and harm of false information through normalized popular science, case interpretation and risk warning, and cultivate the habit of not trusting, not blindly following and emphasizing verification. Through true reports, in-depth investigations and timely rumors, the media can gradually rebuild the trust of the audience and maintain its authority and professionalism in the chaotic information environment.

4.3 Regulatory Level

Maintaining a good communication order is inseparable from the support of perfect laws and regulations. The regulatory authorities should update the system clauses in a timely manner according to the development trend of technology, clarify the legal responsibility for producing and disseminating malicious forged content, and increase the punishment for using Deepfake to commit defamation, fraud and disturb public order. A clear legal definition can effectively deter violations and allow technology applications to operate within the framework of the rule of law.

On this basis, it is also necessary to establish a cross-departmental and cross-platform collaborative supervision mechanism. Network information, radio and television, public security and other departments should strengthen information sharing and joint disposal and improve the discovery speed and processing efficiency of false information. Internet platforms need to fulfill their main responsibilities, strengthen content monitoring and risk early warning, and cooperate with regulatory authorities to block the spread of harmful information in a timely manner. Through the combination of government supervision, platform self-discipline and social supervision, a governance pattern covering the whole chain of creation, communication, verification and accountability will be formed to effectively curb the spread of ethical risks and create a stable and orderly external environment for the recovery of media credibility and the healthy development of industry.

5 Conclusion

This paper systematically analyzes the dilemma of communication ethics of deep forgery technology and its impact on the credibility of the media, reveals the multiple risks of deep forgery in the aspects of authenticity, justice ethics and value ethics, and expounds its internal mechanism of impacting the core functions of the media, dispelling the trust of the audience and destroying the communication ecology. The research shows that deep forgery not only breaks through the ethical bottom line of information dissemination, but also disintegrates the foundation of media credibility from three dimensions: function, trust and ecology, leading to the decline of media authority, the failure of public opinion guidance and the decline of social trust. To cope with this crisis, people must rely on technical testing and upgrading, strengthening media review, improving supervision system and improving public literacy to form a joint force.

References

1. Folorunsho, F., Boamah, B. F.: Deepfake technology and its impact: ethical considerations, societal disruptions, and security threats in ai-generated media. *International journal of information technology and management information systems* **16**(1), 1060-1080 (2025)
2. Barari, S., Lucas, C., Munger, K.: Political deepfakes are as credible as other fake media and (sometimes) real media. *The Journal of Politics* **87**(2), 510-526 (2025)
3. Chapagain, D., Kshetri, N., Aryal, B.: Deepfake disasters: A comprehensive review of technology, ethical concerns, countermeasures, and societal implications. In 2024 International

Conference on Emerging Trends in Networks and Computer Communications (ETNCC), 1-9 (2024)

4. Boediman, E. P.: Exploring the impact of deepfake technology on public trust and media manipulation: A scoping review. *Jurnal Komunikasi* **19**(2), 131-152 (2025)
5. Mathew, J., Narayanan, A.: Reimagining Truth: The Role of AI-Generated Content in Shaping Media Ethics and Audience Trust in a Post-Truth Era. *Communication Research* **2**(1), 72-82 (2025)
6. Hashmi, M., Nabil, Z., Saleem, S.: Deepfakes and the Crisis of Media Credibility. *Global Political Review* **10**(2), 146-163 (2025)
7. Nawaz, H., Ali, S., Irfan, M., Hassan, K.: AI-DRIVEN DEEPFAKE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY: DETECTION METHODS, AND IMPACT ON CREDIBILITY & TRUST OF JOURNALISM. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin* **3**(3), 846-859 (2025)
8. Shin, S. Y., Lee, J.: The effect of deepfake video on news credibility and corrective influence of cost-based knowledge about deepfakes. *Digital Journalism* **10**(3), 412-432 (2022)
9. Wei, X., Wang, D.: Ethical risks and cooperative coping strategies of health information dissemination in social media era. *Communication and Copyright* **2026**(02), 62-65 (2026)
10. Zhang, J., Li, Z., Pan, X.: The deconstruction of news authenticity by deep forgery technology in the era of intellectual media-ethical crisis and trust reconstruction based on the principle of "seeing is believing". *Journalism Research Guide* **17**(05), 12-15 (2026)

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

