

Generative AI in Digital Newsrooms: A Systematic Review of Disclosure, Human Editorial Oversight, News Credibility, Audience Trust, and Journalistic Autonomy with Implications for Ghanaian Journalism

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Abstract: Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is increasingly embedded in news production, yet its implications for credibility, public trust, and professional authority remain unsettled, particularly in under-researched African media systems. This systematic review synthesizes international empirical research on GenAI and automated journalism, with specific attention to AI disclosure, human editorial oversight, audience evaluations, and journalistic autonomy, and interprets the evidence for Ghanaian digital journalism. Searches conducted through scholarly discovery services, publisher indexes, citation chaining, and African research repositories covered January 2020 to 21 July 2026. Following PRISMA 2020 and PRISMA-S principles, 60 records were identified, 43 full-text reports were assessed, and 40 studies were included in a structured narrative synthesis. Only three included studies directly involved Ghana; Ghanaian implications are therefore presented as contextual interpretations of a predominantly international evidence base rather than as Ghana-specific causal conclusions. Across the reviewed literature, journalists most often used GenAI for transcription, summarization, research support, ideation, translation, copyediting, headline development, and preliminary drafting. Audience studies did not support a universal "AI credibility penalty." Responses varied with task type, topic sensitivity, outlet reputation, AI literacy, disclosure wording, and the visibility of human responsibility. Labels implying full automation were generally more problematic than process-based descriptions of AI assistance accompanied by explicit human verification. African studies further highlighted informal adoption, limited institutional policy, local-language constraints, training gaps, infrastructure limitations, and data-governance concerns. The review concludes that GenAI is reconfiguring rather than simply eliminating

journalistic autonomy. An evidence-informed Human-Centered Disclosure and Editorial Accountability Framework is proposed for adaptation and empirical evaluation in Ghanaian digital newsrooms.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence; digital newsrooms; AI disclosure; human editorial oversight; news credibility; audience trust; journalistic autonomy; Ghanaian journalism

1. Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence has moved rapidly from experimental technology to an everyday component of digital news production. Large language models and related generative systems can summarize documents, transcribe interviews, generate or revise copy, translate content, propose headlines, personalize distribution, produce synthetic audio and images, and support verification. These capabilities extend the earlier trajectory of automated journalism, in which structured data were transformed into routine news, but they also create a qualitatively different editorial environment because GenAI can produce open-ended and persuasive language without a stable connection to verified evidence (Cools and Diakopoulos; Diakopoulos; Shi and Sun).

The growing use of GenAI creates a dual challenge for journalism. The first concerns informational quality: whether AI-assisted or AI-generated news is accurate, contextually adequate, unbiased, and credible. The second concerns institutional legitimacy: whether audiences regard an organization as transparent, responsible, and worthy of trust when machines participate in newswork. These challenges are related but not identical. A reader may judge an article to be clear and plausible while simultaneously distrusting the process by which it was produced or questioning who is responsible for errors. Consequently, research must distinguish message credibility from source or outlet credibility and from the broader willingness to rely on journalism under conditions of uncertainty (Appelman and Sundar; Kohring and Matthes).

Disclosure has therefore become a central issue. Labels such as “AI-generated,” “AI-assisted,” or “created with the support of artificial intelligence” are intended to provide transparency, but they also function as interpretive cues. They may activate algorithm aversion, encourage readers to infer that an article was produced without human judgment, or, conversely, signal organizational honesty and accountability. Experimental research increasingly shows that the wording, placement, and explanatory detail of disclosure matter. A short label can produce suspicion when it fails to specify what the technology did, whereas a process-based statement that identifies human verification can strengthen perceived transparency (Altay and Gilardi; Chung et al.; Merle et al.; Toff and Simon). Human editorial oversight is therefore not merely a technical safeguard. It is a public signal that editorial responsibility has not been delegated to an opaque system. Oversight includes source verification, contextual interpretation, bias review, legal and ethical judgment, correction, and final approval. In a newsroom, the distribution of these responsibilities also bears directly on journalistic autonomy. GenAI may expand autonomy by reducing repetitive work and allowing reporters to devote more time to investigation and interpretation. It may also narrow autonomy when proprietary systems, managerial efficiency targets, or platform infrastructures determine how stories are selected, framed, or produced. The crucial question is not whether AI replaces journalists in a simple binary sense, but how professional jurisdiction is redistributed across reporters, editors, managers, vendors, and automated systems (Carlson; Park and Akintade; Wu).

These questions are especially important for Ghanaian journalism. Ghanaian digital newsrooms operate within a media environment characterized by rapid mobile and social-media use, resource constraints, multilingual audiences, intense competition for attention, and continuing concern about misinformation. Empirical work involving Ghana and South Africa indicates that AI tools are often adopted informally by individual journalists for transcription, research, ideation, grammar correction, and fact-checking, while formal newsroom policies and training remain limited (Adjin-Tettey et al.). A four-country African study similarly found diverse professional positions—optimistic, pessimistic, and pragmatic—alongside persistent ethical concerns about accuracy, bias, employment, and accountability (Umejei et al.). These studies provide important contextual anchors, but they do not constitute a sufficiently large Ghana-specific evidence base on which to infer national audience effects.

Existing reviews have mapped automated journalism, newsroom transformation, and the credibility effects of AI provenance and disclosure. However, these strands are commonly treated separately. Reviews centered on audience credibility do not fully integrate African newsroom adoption and professional autonomy, while broader reviews of AI in journalism often discuss ethics without systematically connecting disclosure design and human oversight to audience trust. A synthesis that integrates the international evidence while explicitly examining its relevance, limits, and governance implications for Ghanaian journalism is therefore needed. This distinction is important because the available literature is geographically uneven and cannot be treated as if it were predominantly Ghana-based.

This review addresses that need by synthesizing empirical studies published between 2020 and July 2026 and interpreting the findings for Ghanaian digital journalism. It is therefore an international systematic review with a Ghanaian interpretive and governance focus, not a systematic review restricted to research conducted in Ghana. Its contribution is

threefold. First, it integrates audience-centered and newsroom-centered evidence. Second, it foregrounds African and Global South research within a literature dominated by Europe, North America, and East Asia while making the limits of cross-context transfer explicit. Third, it develops a practical Human-Centered Disclosure and Editorial Accountability Framework that translates the synthesized evidence into governance principles for contextual adaptation and empirical testing in Ghanaian newsrooms.

1.1 Review Questions

- 1) RQ1: How is generative AI being used in digital newsrooms internationally and in African media systems relevant to Ghana?
- 2) RQ2: How do AI provenance and disclosure cues influence perceived news credibility and audience trust?
- 3) RQ3: Under what conditions does visible human editorial oversight improve audience evaluations of AI-assisted news?
- 4) RQ4: How does GenAI adoption affect journalistic autonomy, professional roles, and accountability?
- 5) RQ5: What evidence-informed governance principles can be adapted to support responsible GenAI use in Ghanaian digital newsrooms?

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Source Credibility and Trust in News

Source credibility theory explains audience evaluation through perceptions of expertise, trustworthiness, and believability. In digital journalism, these judgments may target the article, the named author, the news organization, or the production process. Message credibility can remain relatively stable even when confidence in the producing actor declines, which makes it essential to specify the target of evaluation. This review treats credibility as a judgment about the quality and believability of content or source, while trust refers to a broader willingness to rely on a journalist or

institution under uncertainty (Appelman and Sundar; Kohring and Matthes; Mayer et al.). For AI-assisted news, audiences may apply the machine heuristic—the belief that computational systems are objective, consistent, or less emotionally biased—or algorithm aversion, in which visible machine involvement reduces confidence, especially after errors or in tasks requiring moral and contextual judgment (Dietvorst et al.; Sundar and Kim). These mechanisms predict mixed rather than uniform effects because routine data-driven stories may fit audience expectations of automation, whereas politics, conflict, health, and investigative reporting demand stronger human accountability.

2.2 Transparency, Disclosure, and Accountability

Transparency is often treated as an ethical good, but disclosure can have competing effects. It can increase procedural legitimacy by demonstrating honesty, while simultaneously drawing attention to uncertainty about AI competence or editorial control. The effect therefore depends on what a disclosure allows the audience to infer. “AI-generated” may imply full automation; “AI-assisted and reviewed by an editor” communicates collaboration and responsibility. The evidence is best understood as a cue–inference process: audiences receive a cue, infer how the article was produced, and evaluate a target such as the message, journalist, or outlet (Licenji and Hoxha).

This review extends that logic by treating human oversight as an accountability signal. Oversight is credible when it identifies a real editorial function rather than serving as a ceremonial phrase. Effective oversight should specify that a journalist or editor checked sources, factual claims, context, fairness, and legal or ethical risks and retained final approval. Disclosure and oversight are therefore analytically distinct: disclosure communicates information, while oversight describes the control structure behind publication.

2.3 Professional Jurisdiction and Journalistic Autonomy

Journalistic autonomy refers to the ability of journalists and editors to exercise professional judgment over news selection, sourcing, framing, verification, and publication without inappropriate interference. Automation can alter autonomy by redistributing tasks and expertise. Delegating transcription or copyediting may free time, but delegating source interpretation, framing, or factual synthesis can move epistemic authority from journalists to systems whose training data and decision processes are not fully visible. The sociology of professions is useful because it emphasizes jurisdiction: the socially recognized right to define problems, perform tasks, and claim expertise. Recent newsroom evidence shows three possible responses to AI jurisdictional maintenance, hybrid human–machine labor, and jurisdictional retreat (Park and Akintade). The professional consequence depends on whether journalists retain substantive decision authority and the skills needed to challenge machine output.

3. Methods

3.1 Review Design and Reporting Standards

The study used a systematic review and structured narrative synthesis. Reporting followed the PRISMA 2020 statement and the PRISMA-S extension for search reporting (Page et al., 2021; Rethlefsen et al.). Because the included studies used heterogeneous qualitative, survey, experimental, psychophysiological, and mixed designs and reported outcomes in non-comparable forms, quantitative meta-analysis was not appropriate. Synthesis was therefore guided by the Synthesis Without Meta-analysis (SWiM) principles, emphasizing transparent grouping, direction and conditions of effects, and limitations in comparability (Campbell et al.). Before full-text assessment, a written review protocol specified the review questions, eligibility criteria, search concepts, screening sequence, extraction fields, and synthesis domains. The protocol was used internally

to structure the review but was not prospectively registered in an external registry. The unit of inclusion was a distinct empirical study; where multiple reports described overlapping data, the most complete report was retained.

3.2 Information Sources and Search Strategy

Searches covered publications from 1 January 2020 to 21 July 2026. Sources included Google Scholar, Crossref-linked scholarly records, PubMed where relevant, the Directory of Open Access Journals, and targeted publisher searches across Taylor and Francis, Sage, Elsevier, Springer Nature, Frontiers,

MDPI, and ACM. African-focused searches were supplemented through university research repositories and African journal platforms. Backward and forward citation searching was conducted from relevant systematic reviews and highly cited empirical studies. The principal search combined four concept blocks: (1) journalism and newsroom terms; (2) generative and automated AI terms; (3) disclosure, transparency, and human-oversight terms; and (4) credibility, trust, autonomy, and accountability outcomes. Search syntax was adapted to each platform. The core search string is presented in Appendix A.

Table 1. Eligibility Criteria

Criterion	Included	Excluded
Publication period	January 2020–21 July 2026	Published before 2020
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles and full conference papers reporting empirical evidence	Editorials, opinion pieces, book reviews, abstracts without sufficient methods/results
Context	Journalism, news production, news distribution, news audiences, or newsroom governance	Advertising, marketing, education, or general AI use without a journalism/news context
Exposure	Generative AI, automated journalism, algorithmic authorship, AI-generated/assisted content, AI labels, or human–AI collaboration	Technical model development without human or organizational outcomes
Outcomes	Credibility, trust, transparency, acceptance, editorial oversight, accountability, professional roles, or autonomy	Studies with no relevant audience, professional, or governance outcome
Language	English-language full text or detailed English publication record	Insufficient information for reliable extraction

3.3 Study Selection

The searches produced 60 potentially relevant records: 49 through scholarly database and publisher searches and 11 through citation searching and African research repositories. After eight duplicates were removed, 52 records were screened by title and abstract. Seven were excluded because they did not meet the journalism, empirical, or outcome criteria. Forty-five reports were sought

for retrieval; two could not be retrieved with sufficient detail. Forty-three full-text reports were assessed, and three were excluded: one was nonempirical, one was not focused on journalism or news, and one did not report a relevant credibility, trust, oversight, accountability, or autonomy outcome. Reasons for all full-text exclusions were logged against the predefined decision rules and are reported in Appendix B. The final synthesis comprised 40 studies.

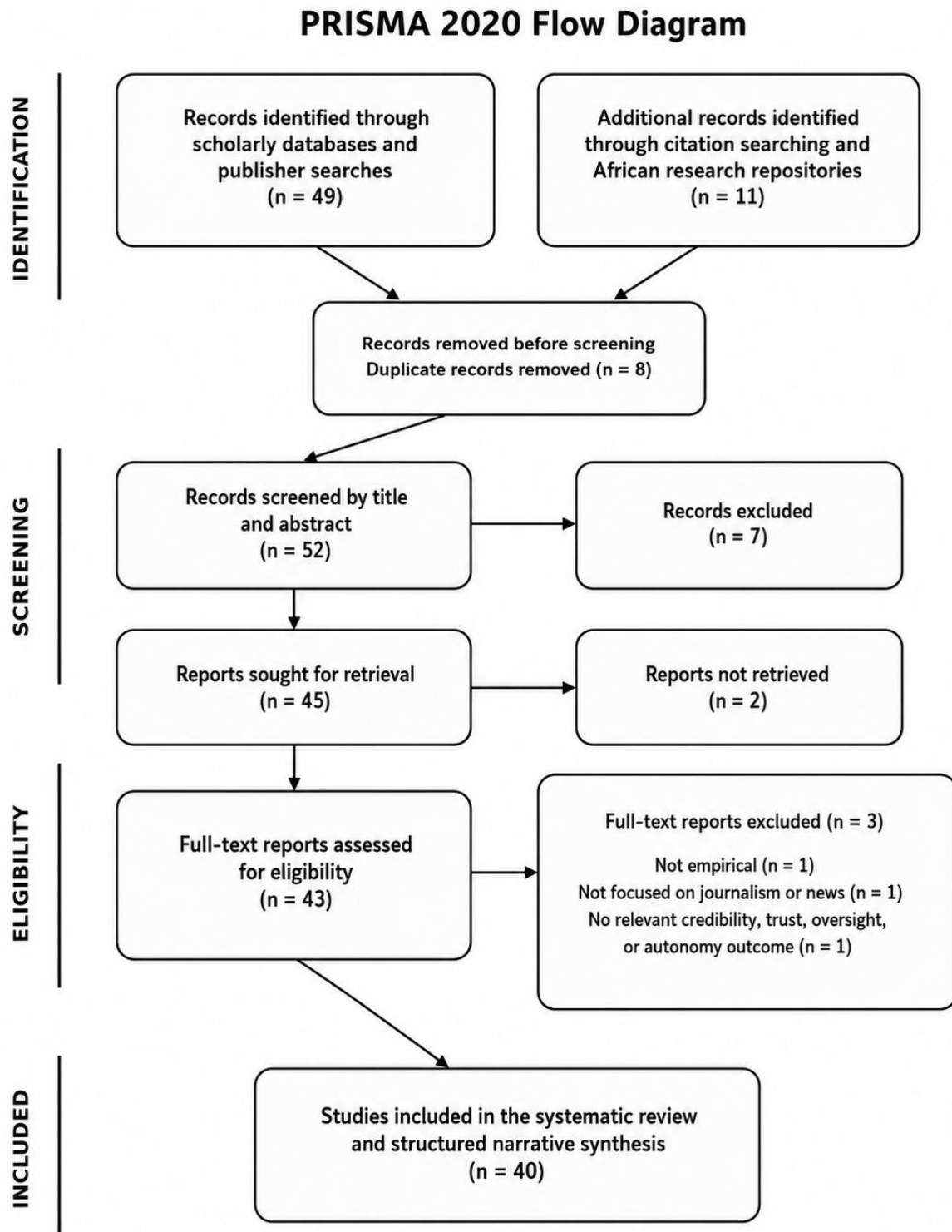


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion

3.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis

A structured extraction matrix recorded author, year, country or region, participants, design, AI application or cue, outcome target, main result, and

implications for oversight and autonomy. The same extraction fields were applied across all included reports to reduce variation in what was recorded. Studies were grouped into two broad evidence

streams: newsroom/professional practice and audience evaluation. Audience studies were further coded according to whether they examined AI provenance, disclosure, wording, oversight, or a combination of these. The synthesis proceeded in four stages. First, descriptive characteristics were mapped by year, region, and design. Second, findings were grouped around newsroom uses, audience credibility and trust, human editorial oversight, and professional autonomy. Third, recurrent moderators—task type, topic, disclosure wording, outlet reputation, AI literacy, and cultural context—were identified. Fourth, the evidence was translated into a governance framework for contextual application in Ghanaian digital newsrooms.

3.5 Methodological Appraisal and Review Consistency

Methodological appraisal was design-sensitive and informed by the logic of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool. Studies were not excluded solely on quality grounds because the purpose was to map a rapidly developing evidence base. Experimental studies were examined for clear manipulation, comparable conditions, outcome validity, and reporting of sample and analysis. Survey studies were examined for sampling, construct clarity, and analytic fit. Qualitative studies were examined for alignment among questions, sampling, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The same design-specific criteria were applied across studies, and recurrent limitations included convenience or online-panel samples, single-country designs, self-reported acceptance, short news stimuli, incomplete reporting of the exact disclosure wording, and limited longitudinal evidence. These limitations were incorporated into the strength and scope of the conclusions rather than treated as equivalent across designs.

Screening, data extraction, and methodological appraisal were led by the first author using the prespecified protocol. Consistency in this lead-reviewer design was supported by written eligibility rules, a fixed extraction matrix, explicit full-text

exclusion reasons, and the use of the same design-sensitive appraisal criteria throughout the review. Potentially ambiguous eligibility or appraisal decisions were reconsidered against the stated criteria before synthesis, and the study-level evidence tables served as an audit trail linking each included report to its context, design, and principal finding. The second author critically reviewed the methodological description, interpretation of the synthesized evidence, and the resulting governance implications. Duplicate independent screening of every record was not undertaken; consequently, no inter-rater agreement statistic was calculated. This review structure is reported transparently and is acknowledged as a limitation.

4. Results

4.1 Characteristics of the Included Evidence

The review included 40 studies. Publication activity accelerated sharply after the public diffusion of large language models: 2 studies were published in 2020, 3 in 2021, 1 in 2022, 3 in 2023, 11 in 2024, 12 in 2025, and 8 in 2026. 10 studies focused primarily on newsroom practice, professional roles, or organizational governance, while 30 examined audience credibility, trust, acceptance, or selection. By design, 21 studies used experimental, conjoint, EEG, or psychophysiological approaches; 12 used interviews, qualitative inquiry, or policy/content analysis; 4 used survey or modeling approaches; and 3 used other or mixed methods.

The geographical distribution remained uneven. Europe and North America accounted for much of the experimental evidence. Seven of the 40 included studies were African-focused, and only three studies directly involved Ghana. The evidence base should therefore be understood as predominantly international, with a smaller African evidence stream used to support contextual interpretation for Ghana. This imbalance is consequential because audience trust, language performance, newsroom resources, and professional norms are shaped by media-system conditions; findings from high-

income settings cannot be transferred to Ghana without qualification or local testing.

Table 2. Distribution of Included Studies by Evidence Stream and Method

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Newsroom/professional-practice studies	10	25.0%
Audience evaluation studies	30	75.0%
Experimental, conjoint, EEG, or psychophysiological designs	21	52.5%
Qualitative interview or content/policy-analysis designs	12	30.0%
Survey or modeling designs	4	10.0%
Other/mixed designs	3	7.5%
African-focused studies	7	17.5%
Studies directly involving Ghana	3	7.5%

Table 3A. Newsroom, Professional-Practice, and Governance Studies

Study	Year	Context	Design/focus	Principal finding
Adjin-Tettey, Muringa, Danso, and Zondi	2024	Ghana and South Africa	18 journalist interviews; Newsroom adoption and constraints	AI use was mostly informal and journalist-led, concentrated in transcription, research, ideation, and fact-checking; cost, language, training, and organizational inertia constrained formal integration.
Cools and Diakopoulos	2024	Netherlands and Denmark	Semi-structured interviews; Generative AI uses across news production	Journalists identified multiple uses across production and distribution but emphasized verification, confidentiality, and editorial accountability.
Gondwe	2024	Five sub-Saharan African countries	Journalist interviews; Ubuntu-oriented journalism	Journalists combined optimism with concerns about AI reliability, representativeness, inclusion, and human dignity; an Ubuntu-based normative approach was proposed.
Munoriyarwa	2024	Southern African newsrooms	20 stakeholder interviews; Socio-technological barriers	Resource scarcity, unequal infrastructures, organizational culture, and imported technologies limited meaningful newsroom integration.
Wu	2024	News professionals	Qualitative study; Journalists' individual use of ChatGPT and AI tools	Journalists adopted tools according to professional values and personal agency, sometimes ahead of formal newsroom policy, creating governance gaps.
Umejei, Ayisi, Phiri, and Tallam	2025	Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa	Semi-structured interviews; African journalists' experiences and ethical dilemmas	Journalists clustered as optimists, pessimists, and pragmatists; benefits coexisted with concerns about accuracy, employment, bias, and weak institutional guidance.
Fernández-Barrero and Serrano-Martín	2025	Spain	Policy/content analysis; Newsroom transparency and self-regulation	Disclosure practices were inconsistent, and many organizations lacked sufficiently detailed rules on accountability and human review.
Sarisakaloğlu	2025	India	20 journalist interviews; AI adoption in a Global South newsroom context	Adoption was shaped by perceived usefulness, professional norms, organizational support, and concern that AI could erode core journalistic skills.

Study	Year	Context	Design/focus	Principal finding
Park and Akintade	2026	Nigeria	50 journalist interviews; Professional jurisdiction and task redistribution	AI produced jurisdictional maintenance, hybrid labor, and selective retreat; journalists retained formal authority while delegating routine and preliminary work.
Chiridza and Mare	2026	Zimbabwe	30 journalist interviews; Generative AI in resource-constrained newsrooms	Adoption was pragmatic but organizationally ambivalent; younger journalists used AI more, while Western bias and limited African-language performance remained concerns.

Table 3B. Audience Studies Published from 2020 to 2024

Study	Year	Context	Design/focus	Principal finding
Kim and Kim	2020	South Korea	Survey and adoption model; Acceptance of AI-generated news	Perceived usefulness, credibility, and attitudes toward AI shaped willingness to adopt AI-generated news.
Tandoc, Yao, and Wu	2020	Singapore	Online experiment; Algorithm versus human authorship	Authorship effects were small and contingent; credibility judgments depended on audience expectations and story characteristics.
Jia and Johnson	2021	United States/China-oriented news context	Online experiment; Source credibility and selective exposure	Source credibility influenced selection of automated news, showing that outlet and source cues can outweigh authorship alone.
Jia and Liu	2021	Online news users	Experiment; Algorithmic source and hostile-media perceptions	Algorithmic attribution altered source judgments and perceived bias under politically contested conditions.
Wölker and Powell	2021	European news users	Experiment; Automated journalism credibility and selection	Readers did not display a uniform aversion to automated articles; topic and selection context moderated responses.
Heiselberg, Blom, and van Dalen	2022	Denmark	Audience experiment; Neural-voice news broadcast	A neural voice could communicate routine news credibly, although perceptions of naturalness and social presence remained important.
Gong	2023	China	Psychophysiological experiment; AI versus human newscasts	AI voices produced different cognitive and affective responses, indicating that modality influences credibility processing.
Lermann Henestrosa, Greving, and Kimmerle	2023	Germany	Experiment; AI authorship and evaluative information	AI authorship did not automatically reduce credibility or trustworthiness; evaluative framing had a stronger effect.
Liu, Wang, and Yu	2023	China	EEG-assisted experiment; AIGC labeling	AIGC labels changed attention and evaluation, demonstrating that labels operate as cognitive cues rather than neutral notices.
Jia, Appelman, Wu, and Bien-Aimé	2024	United States	Experiment (N = 269); AI roles in news bylines	Perceived AI contribution, more than the exact label, reduced source and message credibility through lower perceived humanness.

Study	Year	Context	Design/focus	Principal finding
Altay and Gilardi	2024	Multi-study online samples	Experiments; generated headline labels	AI- People discounted headlines labeled AI-generated, including true or human-written items, partly because they inferred full automation.
Lermann Henestrosa and Kimmerle	2024	Germany	Experiment; Assumed AI versus human authorship	Perceived authorship shaped social evaluations more consistently than assessments of the underlying text quality.
Jang, Kwak, and Bucy	2024	United States	Experiment; Knowledge of automated journalism	Prior knowledge moderated evaluations of algorithmically generated news, underscoring the role of AI literacy and familiarity.
Moravec et al.	2024	Cross-national/Euro pean	Population survey; Perception of AI in journalism	Attitudes toward AI journalism varied with socio-economic and technological conditions, supporting context-sensitive rather than universal conclusions.
Wischnewski and Krämer	2024	Germany	Experiment; AI-attributed polarizing news	AI attribution interacted with confirmation bias and political congruence; machine authorship did not consistently neutralize polarization.

Table 3C. Audience Studies Published from 2025 to July 2026

Study	Year	Context	Design/focus	Principal finding
Gondwe	2025	Ten African countries	Online survey (N = 1,960); Trust, bias, and transparency in AI-driven news	Trust was broadly neutral and varied by demographics; transparency and perceived bias shaped evaluations without producing a single continental pattern.
Bien-Aimé, Wu, Appelman, and Jia	2025	United States	Audience sensemaking study; AI/human bylines	Readers interpreted bylines through assumptions about the division of labor between people and machines; collaboration cues required explanation.
Blom, Heiselberg, van Dalen, and Andersen	2025	Denmark	Audience study; Sentiments toward GenAI use and labeling	Participants described AI use as simultaneously useful and unsettling, with support depending on task, transparency, and retained human responsibility.
Leuppert, Weinmann, and Eiden	2025	Germany	Audience experiment; AI-authored reporters	Credibility evaluations varied by task and disclosure context, with fully autonomous AI reporters facing greater legitimacy concerns than assisted workflows.
Sadri, Payne, Brown, and Billings	2025	United States	Sports-news experiment; Human versus AI authorship	Authorship and fan identity jointly influenced credibility and sharing intentions, showing the importance of domain identification.
Gherheș, Fărcașiu, Cernicova-Buca, and Coman	2025	Romania	Comparative audience evaluation; AI versus human headlines	AI-generated headlines could perform effectively, but trust and linguistic judgments depended on headline type and perceived authenticity.
Toff and Simon	2025	News audiences	Qualitative audience research; AI disclosure dilemma	Audiences wanted transparency but often interpreted disclosure as evidence that newsrooms should not have used AI, creating a legitimacy dilemma.

Study	Year	Context	Design/focus	Principal finding
Yeste-Piquer et al.	2025	Spain	Survey/experimental study; Preference for robot journalists	Some users valued perceived objectivity and consistency, while others rejected machine authorship on grounds of empathy and accountability.
Wittenberg et al.	2025	United States	Large online experiments; Labels for AI-generated media	Label effects depended on specificity, accuracy, and user interpretation; generic labels were insufficient for robust understanding.
Thomson et al.	2026	Two-country audience sample	60 in-depth interviews; Acceptance of 23 newsroom use cases	Acceptance depended on the task, expected accuracy, transparency, legal/ethical risk, and evidence of human supervision.
Valenzuela, Bachmann, Borah, and Solís Valdés	2026	Chile	Preregistered conjoint experiment (N = 2,145); GenAI applications, oversight, and disclosure	Human oversight and disclosure were the strongest positive predictors of credibility and outlet selection; automated content production modestly reduced both.
Chung, Choi, and Jones-Jang	2026	United States	Experiment (N = 393); Disclosure in AI-assisted fact-checking	Detailed disclosure explaining procedures and human oversight increased author and source credibility; third-party revelation of undisclosed use damaged trust.
Gilardi et al.	2026	German-speaking Switzerland	Preregistered survey experiment (N = 599); AI-generated, AI-assisted, and human-written news	Perceived quality was similar across conditions; disclosure increased immediate curiosity but did not transform longer-term willingness to read AI news.
Liu, Chen, and Nah	2026	United States	National panel survey (N = 1,252); AI, human, and human-AI authorship	Credibility differed across authorship models and was conditioned by social trust and public discussion about AI.
Merle, Schneider, and Krueger	2026	United States	Between-subject experiment (N = 415); Disclosure wording	"AI-generated" produced lower message credibility than "AI-assisted" or "AI-influenced," demonstrating that disclosure terminology matters.

4.2 Uses of Generative AI in Digital Newsrooms

Across newsroom studies, the most common uses of GenAI were transcription, summarization, background research, translation, grammar and style correction, headline generation, brainstorming, question formulation, preliminary drafting, and support for fact-checking. These uses were concentrated in low- to medium-risk stages of production rather than final publication. Journalists generally valued speed and the reduction of repetitive work, especially where staffing and time were limited (Adjin-Tettey et al.; Cools and Diakopoulos; Umejei et al.).

Adoption was frequently individual rather than institutional. Journalists used publicly available

tools before their organizations established policies, approved platforms, or training. This pattern was visible in Ghana and South Africa, across four African countries, and in qualitative research from other Global South settings. Individual experimentation can support innovation, but it creates hidden variation in data handling, source confidentiality, verification, and disclosure. The absence of policy does not mean the absence of AI; it means that use occurs without consistent organizational control (Adjin-Tettey et al.; Sarisakaloğlu; Wu).

African studies also highlighted infrastructure and representation. Cost, unreliable access, limited local-language performance, Western-centered training data, and lack of locally relevant tools constrained

adoption. These problems are not merely technical. Weak performance in Akan, Ewe, Ga, Dagbani, Ghanaian Pidgin, and other locally used varieties can distort quotations, cultural references, names, and political meaning. Human verification is therefore especially important in multilingual reporting and community journalism.

The evidence supports a risk-based distinction among tasks. Transcription, spelling correction, and formatting are generally lower risk when source material remains available for checking. Summarizing interviews, translating sensitive statements, drafting political news, generating images, and conducting fact-checks are higher risk because errors can alter evidence or misrepresent people. The appropriateness of AI use should therefore be determined by task criticality, not by a simple organization-wide decision to “use” or “not use” AI.

4.3 AI Disclosure, Provenance, and News Credibility

The audience evidence does not support a universal credibility penalty for AI involvement. Several experiments found no significant difference between AI-attributed and human-attributed articles when content was held constant, particularly for routine or informational stories. In other studies, AI authorship reduced credibility, but the effect was conditional on topic, perceived humanness, political congruence, domain identity, or the perceived extent of machine contribution (Jia et al.; Lermann Henestrosa et al.; Tandoc et al.; Wölker and Powell).

A central distinction is between provenance and disclosure. Provenance concerns who or what produced the content; disclosure concerns what audiences are told. When a label leads readers to infer that an article was generated entirely by AI, credibility is more likely to decline. Altay and Gilardi (2024) found that readers discounted AI-labeled headlines even when they were accurate or human-produced because the label activated an assumption of full automation. Merle et al. (2026)

similarly found that “AI-generated” was evaluated less favorably than “AI-assisted” or “AI-influenced.” Disclosure can nevertheless improve trust when it explains the process. In AI-assisted fact-checking, detailed disclosure of procedures and human review strengthened author and source credibility, while later third-party revelation of undisclosed AI use damaged credibility (Chung et al.). The Chilean conjoint experiment found that transparency and human oversight were among the strongest positive predictors of credibility and outlet selection (Valenzuela et al.). These findings indicate that concealment creates a greater reputational risk than proportionate, well-designed transparency.

Vague labels are therefore problematic. A one-line statement that “AI was used” provides little information about whether the system transcribed an interview, corrected grammar, drafted the story, selected sources, or generated evidence. Such ambiguity encourages readers to fill the information gap with their own assumptions. Effective disclosure should describe the function of AI, the extent of its contribution, and the human verification process in plain language.

4.4 Human Editorial Oversight as a Trust Mechanism

Human oversight emerged as the most consistent condition associated with audience acceptance. It reassures readers that a professional remains responsible for accuracy, context, fairness, and correction. However, the evidence suggests that “human in the loop” should not be treated as a symbolic phrase. Readers respond more positively when oversight is concrete—for example, when the disclosure states that a named editor checked factual claims and approved publication.

Oversight matters most when the task is interpretive or high stakes. Audiences are more accepting of AI for transcription, formatting, data processing, or suggestions than for fully autonomous political reporting, investigative synthesis, sensitive images, or fact-checking. Human review is therefore both a technical quality-control mechanism and a normative guarantee that journalism remains

answerable to professional and public standards (Blom et al.; Thomson et al.; Valenzuela et al.).

The evidence also reveals a transparency paradox. Audiences often say that they want disclosure but may interpret disclosure as evidence that the newsroom exercised poor judgment by using AI. This paradox is not an argument against transparency. It demonstrates that transparency must be connected to a defensible use policy. Newsrooms cannot expect wording alone to compensate for inappropriate automation. Trust depends on both what the organization says and what the organization has actually done (Toff and Simon).

4.5 Journalistic Autonomy and Professional Roles

GenAI is changing journalistic autonomy through task redistribution. In the most positive scenario, journalists use AI to remove repetitive work and gain time for source development, investigation, analysis, and field reporting. In this model, automation supports autonomy because the journalist retains control of the editorial problem, evaluates evidence, and decides what is published. A less favorable scenario involves invisible dependence. When journalists routinely accept AI summaries, translations, or drafts without reconstructing the evidence, professional judgment becomes anchored to machine output. This can narrow the range of questions asked, reproduce training-data bias, and reduce the ability of reporters to identify subtle errors. The risk is particularly serious for early-career journalists who may not develop core writing, verification, and news judgment skills if foundational tasks are delegated too early.

The Nigerian evidence identifies jurisdictional maintenance, hybrid labor, and jurisdictional retreat. Journalists may retain final approval while losing practical control over parts of the workflow. Formal authority is therefore not sufficient; autonomy requires substantive capacity to question the system, access original sources, reject output, and explain editorial decisions (Park and Akintade).

Organizational autonomy is also affected by technology vendors and platforms. Proprietary systems determine model behavior, data retention, language performance, and terms of use. Newsrooms that rely on external tools without procurement standards can expose confidential material, become locked into vendor workflows, or permit technical defaults to shape editorial practice. Responsible adoption requires governance at the institutional level, not only individual caution.

4.6 Evidence Specific to Ghana and Africa

The Ghana-specific evidence stream was limited to three empirical studies that directly included Ghana. The Ghana–South Africa interview study found limited formal integration and predominantly discretionary use of tools for transcription, research, story ideas, and fact-checking. The four-country African study documented varied professional attitudes and recurring ethical dilemmas. The ten-country African audience survey included Ghana within a broader continental sample and found broadly neutral trust, with demographic and contextual differences. Together, these studies provide valuable contextual evidence, but they remain insufficient for causal conclusions about Ghanaian audiences or the effects of particular disclosure designs in Ghana.

No included study conducted a Ghana-only factorial experiment comparing no disclosure, AI-generated disclosure, AI-assisted disclosure, and AI-assisted disclosure with explicit human oversight. There is also little evidence on how Ghanaian audiences respond across languages, news topics, outlet types, or levels of media trust. The problem addressed by this review is therefore an active Ghanaian research gap rather than an already established Ghana-specific effect. International findings are used to identify plausible mechanisms and governance options, not to claim that effect sizes or audience responses are nationally validated in Ghana.

The African literature consistently identifies contextual concerns that are less visible in Global North studies: underrepresentation of African

languages and knowledge systems, dependence on imported platforms, infrastructure costs, data extraction, limited newsroom training, and uncertainty about local policy. These conditions increase the importance of human contextual

judgment and institutional accountability. They also mean that responsible AI governance in Ghana should not merely copy policies from large Western news organizations.

Table 4. Integrated Thematic Synthesis

Theme	Consistent evidence	Important contingencies	Implication for Ghana
Newsroom use	AI is used most often for transcription, summarization, research, editing, translation, ideation, and preliminary drafting.	Task risk, data sensitivity, staff experience, and availability of policy/training.	Adopt task-specific rules rather than blanket approval or prohibition.
Credibility	AI involvement does not produce a universal credibility penalty.	Topic, outlet reputation, perceived AI contribution, humanness, political congruence, and AI literacy.	Test disclosure and authorship effects with Ghanaian audiences before standardizing labels.
Disclosure	Vague “AI used” labels are less informative and may trigger assumptions of full automation.	Wording, placement, timing, detail, and whether use is revealed by the outlet or a third party.	Use plain-language, process-based disclosure proportional to AI contribution.
Human oversight	Visible and specific editorial review generally improves acceptance and accountability.	Oversight must be substantive and credible, especially for high-risk content.	Name the responsible editor and specify verification for consequential uses.
Autonomy	AI redistributes work rather than simply replacing journalists.	Managerial pressure, deskilling, vendor dependence, and access to original evidence.	Protect final authority, skill development, source relationships, and the right to reject output.
African context	Adoption is often informal and constrained by resources, language, and weak institutional guidance.	Local languages, infrastructure, data governance, and media-system conditions.	Build Ghana-specific policies, training, local-language evaluation, and audit mechanisms.

5. Discussion

5.1 From an “AI Penalty” to Conditional Credibility

The most important conclusion is that audience response cannot be reduced to a simple preference for human or machine authorship. Credibility effects are conditional. When AI performs routine, structured, or clearly supportive tasks, audiences may judge the resulting content as comparable to human-produced news. When AI is presented as autonomous, used for sensitive interpretation, or associated with unclear responsibility, credibility and trust are more likely to decline.

This conditional pattern explains apparent contradictions in the literature. Null effects do not prove that audiences are indifferent to AI; they may indicate that the tested story was routine, the label was weak, or the outlet cue dominated evaluation. Negative effects may reflect normative concerns about legitimacy rather than detection of lower textual quality. Researchers and practitioners must therefore distinguish “Is the article believable?” from “Was it appropriate for the newsroom to use AI in this way?”

For Ghanaian digital media, this distinction is vital. A grammatically polished article may still damage trust if readers later learn that a system fabricated quotations, translated a local-language statement incorrectly, or generated political analysis without

accountable review. Quality assessment must therefore encompass both the output and the process.

5.2 Human Oversight Is an Editorial Institution, Not a Label

The review shows that human oversight is the most actionable trust mechanism, but its value depends on institutional design. A statement that content was “reviewed by a human” is weak if the reviewer lacked time, expertise, access to sources, or authority to reject publication. Oversight should be operationalized through workflow requirements: source access, fact verification, comparison with original records, contextual and fairness review, documentation of changes, and named approval. Oversight should also be proportional to risk. Low-risk uses may require routine checking, while high-risk uses should require senior editorial approval, legal or ethical review, and explicit disclosure. This approach avoids two extremes: treating every spell-checking function as disclosure-worthy or treating substantive machine-generated analysis as equivalent to ordinary editing.

5.3 Journalistic Autonomy Is Being Reconfigured

The evidence suggests that autonomy is being reconfigured at three levels. At the task level, AI changes who performs transcription, rewriting, and preliminary synthesis. At the organizational level, managers decide which tools are approved, how productivity is measured, and whether disclosure is required. At the infrastructural level, vendors and platforms shape the available models, data practices, and language capabilities.

Autonomy is preserved when journalists define the editorial objective, choose appropriate evidence, interrogate outputs, and retain final responsibility. It is weakened when AI becomes an unquestioned first draft, when staff are pressured to publish faster, or when errors cannot be traced to a documented decision. The strongest governance model is therefore augmentation with contestability: journalists must be able to inspect, challenge, override, and document AI-supported decisions.

5.4 Implications for Ghanaian Digital Newsrooms

Because the Ghana-specific empirical base remains small, the following implications should be read as evidence-informed adaptations of the international and African synthesis rather than as nationally validated effects. Ghanaian news organizations should begin with an institutional inventory of actual AI use. Policies written without understanding current practice will miss the informal tools already used by reporters. An inventory should identify tools, tasks, data entered, ownership of accounts, storage locations, subscription terms, and publication consequences. Second, organizations should develop tiered rules. Routine internal assistance may be permitted with basic verification. AI-assisted public content should require documented human review. Fully or substantially generated content, synthetic images, political fact-checks, election coverage, health reporting, and investigative analysis should face higher approval and disclosure thresholds.

Third, local-language and cultural accuracy must be treated as a distinct risk domain. Newsrooms should test systems on names, place references, idioms, proverbs, political terminology, and code-switching before operational use. A system that performs well in standardized English may still be unsuitable for Ghanaian multilingual reporting.

Fourth, newsroom training should combine practical skill with professional ethics. Prompting alone is insufficient. Journalists need methods for verifying claims, protecting confidential sources, identifying hallucinations, documenting AI contribution, recognizing bias, and explaining the use of AI to audiences.

Finally, disclosure should be standardized across the organization. Audiences should not encounter inconsistent wording across reporters or platforms. A small set of approved disclosure templates can distinguish editing assistance, translation or transcription, partial drafting, substantial generation, and synthetic visual content.

6. Human-Centered Disclosure and Editorial Accountability Framework

Based on the synthesis, this review proposes a six-stage Human-Centered Disclosure and Editorial Accountability Framework for responsible GenAI use in Ghanaian digital newsrooms. The framework treats trust as the outcome of aligned technology

use, editorial control, and public communication rather than disclosure alone. It is an evidence-informed governance proposal derived from the cross-context synthesis; it is not presented as an empirically validated model. Its stages therefore require organizational adaptation, local stakeholder input, and prospective evaluation before claims can be made about effectiveness in Ghanaian newsrooms.

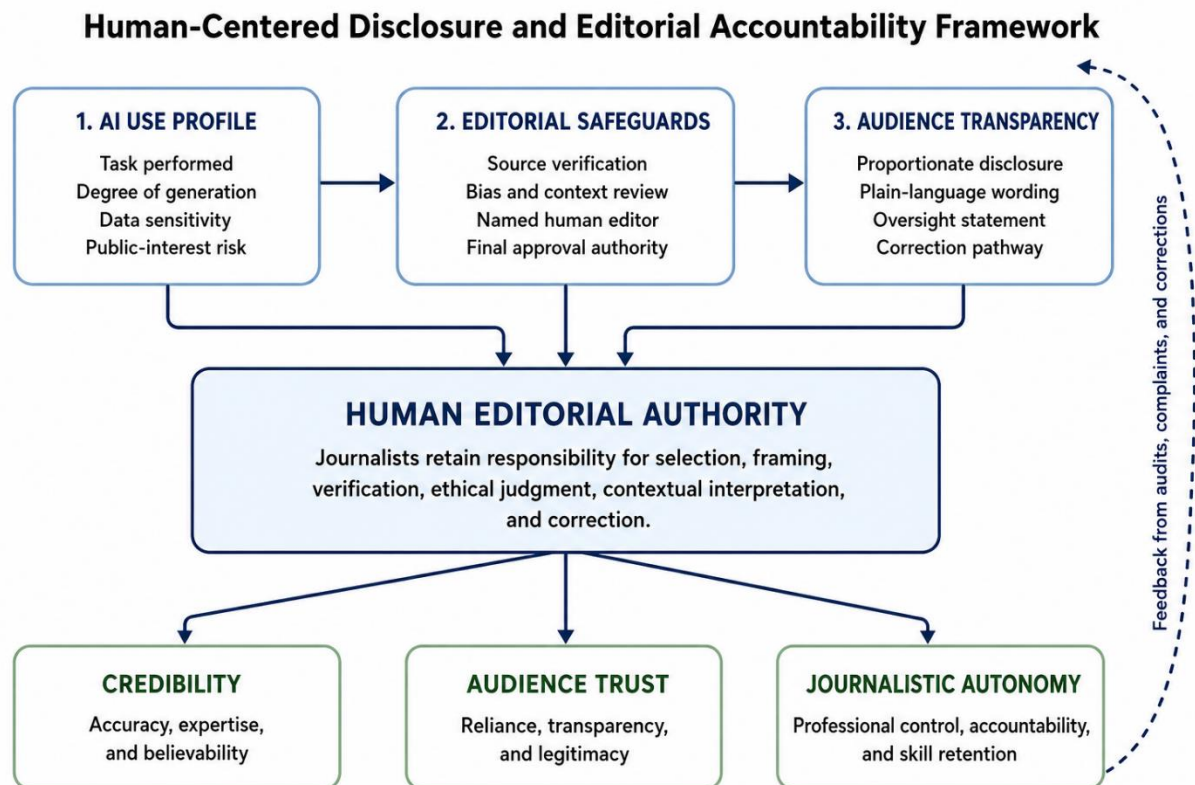


Figure 2. Human-Centered Disclosure and Editorial Accountability Framework for Ghanaian digital newsrooms

Note. The framework links AI-use profiling, substantive editorial safeguards, audience transparency, and feedback while preserving human editorial authority.

Stage 1: Identify the AI contribution. Record the tool, the task, the proportion of generated or transformed content, and whether source material or personal data were entered.

Stage 2: Classify editorial risk. Assess public-interest sensitivity, potential harm, language and cultural complexity, confidentiality, legal exposure, and the possibility that the output will be mistaken for verified evidence.

Stage 3: Apply human verification. Require access to original sources, verification of names and claims, contextual review, bias checks, and comparison of translations or summaries with the source material.

Stage 4: Retain accountable approval. Assign a journalist or editor with authority to revise, reject, delay, correct, and explain the content. Final responsibility must not be attributed to the software.

Stage 5: Disclose proportionately. Use a standardized statement that explains what AI did

and what a human checked. Disclosure should become more prominent as the AI contribution and public risk increase.

Stage 6: Audit and learn. Track corrections, audience complaints, tool failures, and staff workarounds. Use this evidence to revise approved tools, training, and disclosure templates.

Table 5. Recommended Disclosure Templates for Newsroom Use

AI contribution	Typical examples	Recommended disclosure wording	Approval level
Minimal assistance	Spelling, punctuation, formatting	No public disclosure normally required; ordinary editorial checks remain mandatory.	Reporter/editor
Process assistance	Transcription, translation, document summarization	"AI tools assisted with transcription/translation. The journalist checked the output against the original source."	Reporter + desk editor
Partial generation	Headline options, structural outline, preliminary draft	"AI assisted with an initial draft. A journalist verified the sources, rewrote the article, and takes responsibility for the final version."	Desk editor
Substantial generation	Large portions of text, data-to-text, automated updates	"This report was substantially generated using AI from verified data and was reviewed and approved by [editorial role/name]."	Senior editor
Synthetic media	Generated or materially altered image, audio, or video	Prominent label identifying the synthetic element, purpose, source basis, and editorial approval.	Senior editor + ethics/legal review
High-risk public-interest use	Elections, conflict, health, investigations, fact-checking	Detailed process note specifying AI function, evidence checked, responsible editor, and correction route.	Senior editor + specialist review

7. Recommendations

- 1) Ghanaian digital newsrooms should conduct a confidential audit of existing AI use before adopting policy, because informal individual use is likely to be more extensive than official practice suggests.
- 2) Every newsroom should establish a written, task-based AI policy covering approved tools, prohibited data, source confidentiality, verification, disclosure, synthetic media, corrections, and responsibility.
- 3) Human oversight should be documented for high-risk uses. The responsible journalist or editor should have access to original evidence and authority to reject AI output.
- 4) Disclosure should describe the AI function and human review rather than relying on a vague "AI-generated" label.
- 5) Newsrooms, journalism schools, and professional associations should develop continuous training in AI literacy, verification, data protection, local-language evaluation, and ethical decision-making.

6) Ghana-focused audience experiments should test disclosure wording, label placement, human-oversight statements, topic sensitivity, outlet reputation, and language across diverse demographic groups.

7) Media organizations should collaborate on shared standards and incident reporting so that errors and good practices can be learned across the sector without suppressing innovation.

8. Future Research Agenda

The most urgent research need is a preregistered Ghanaian factorial experiment that separates AI provenance from disclosure and human oversight. A 2×2 or $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design could compare human and AI-assisted production, disclosure and no disclosure, and explicit oversight and no oversight. Outcomes should distinguish message credibility, journalist credibility, outlet trust, willingness to share, and continued use of the platform. Research should also compare topic domains. Audience tolerance is likely to differ across sports,

finance, entertainment, politics, health, conflict, and investigative reporting. The same disclosure may not be appropriate across all forms of news.

Longitudinal newsroom studies are needed to determine whether AI actually creates time for public-interest reporting or merely increases output expectations. Such studies should examine workload, skill development, corrections, job quality, and the distribution of authority between reporters and editors.

Local-language research is essential. Studies should test transcription, translation, and summarization across Ghanaian languages and code-switched speech and should involve native-speaking journalists in evaluation. Accuracy measures should include cultural meaning, not only literal word matching.

Finally, political-economy research should examine vendor dependence, copyright, data extraction, platform visibility, and the effect of AI-generated summaries on traffic and revenue for Ghanaian publishers.

9. Limitations

This review has several limitations. The search was restricted to English-language records and may have missed relevant studies published in other languages. The evidence base is rapidly changing, and studies published after 21 July 2026 were not included. Some recent articles were available as advance online publications, and final volume or page details may change. In addition, the protocol was prepared a priori but was not prospectively registered in an external review registry. Screening, extraction, and methodological appraisal were led by one reviewer rather than completed in duplicate by two independent reviewers. Although predefined eligibility rules, standardized extraction fields, an exclusion log, and consistent design-sensitive appraisal criteria were used to support procedural consistency, the absence of fully independent duplicate review may increase susceptibility to selection or extraction error.

The included studies were methodologically heterogeneous and did not consistently report

comparable effect sizes, which prevented meta-analysis. Many audience experiments used short stimuli and online samples, while newsroom studies relied on self-reported practice. The geographical evidence was also uneven: only seven included studies were African-focused and only three directly involved Ghana. Consequently, Ghanaian conclusions in this review are contextual interpretations of a predominantly international literature rather than estimates of Ghana-specific effects. The Human-Centered Disclosure and Editorial Accountability Framework should therefore be treated as an evidence-informed governance proposal that requires empirical testing, stakeholder validation, and adaptation within specific Ghanaian organizations.

10. Conclusion

Generative AI is already part of journalism, including African newswork, but its consequences are determined by governance rather than technology alone. Across the international evidence synthesized here, audiences do not invariably reject AI-assisted news. Instead, credibility and trust depend on what AI did, how the newsroom explains its role, whether human editorial responsibility is visible, and whether the task was appropriate for automation. Because only three included studies directly involved Ghana, these patterns should be treated as evidence-informed propositions for Ghanaian journalism rather than as nationally validated audience effects.

For Ghanaian digital newsrooms, the central governance challenge is to move from informal individual experimentation to accountable institutional practice while generating stronger local evidence. Human oversight must remain substantive: journalists should verify evidence, preserve context, protect sources, make ethical judgments, approve publication, and correct errors. Disclosure should be specific enough to communicate this responsibility without implying that minor assistance is equivalent to autonomous generation.

GenAI can support journalistic autonomy when it removes repetitive work while preserving professional control. It can undermine autonomy when systems become invisible authorities, when speed replaces verification, or when imported tools reproduce linguistic and cultural limitations. The proposed human-centered, risk-based framework offers a defensible starting point for Ghanaian newsrooms: use AI selectively, document its contribution, verify rigorously, disclose proportionately, and keep final editorial authority with accountable professionals. Its practical value, however, should be established through Ghana-specific audience research and newsroom-based evaluation rather than assumed from international evidence alone.

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Appendix A. Core Search Strategy

The following core query was adapted to the syntax of each information source:

(journalis OR newsroom* OR news OR "digital media") AND ("generative AI" OR ChatGPT OR "large language model*" OR "AI-generated" OR "AI-assisted" OR "automated journalism" OR "algorithmic authorship") AND (disclos* OR transparen* OR label* OR byline* OR "human oversight" OR "human review" OR accountability OR autonomy OR credibility OR trust)*

Supplementary searches combined country and regional terms (Ghana, Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Global South) with journalism and AI terms. Citation searching was conducted from relevant systematic reviews and empirical studies. Searches were updated through 21 July 2026.

Appendix B. Full-Text Exclusion Log

Table B1. Reports Excluded after Full-Text Assessment

Report type	Primary exclusion reason	Decision rule applied
Conceptual essay on potential uses of generative AI in news production	Nonempirical	No original human-participant, organizational, or content-analysis evidence
Study of AI disclosure in commercial advertising	Outside journalism/news context	Stimulus was not presented as news or journalistic communication
Technical evaluation of AI news-generation accuracy	No focal outcome	Did not report audience credibility/trust or newsroom oversight/autonomy outcomes

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