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Letter to Editor

Artificial Voice Cloning in School Ecosystems: Ethical Risk, Digital Safety and Emerging Implications for Child and Adolescent Health

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1. Dear Editor

The rapid advancement of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has introduced artificial voice cloning—the ability to generate highly realistic synthetic speech that mimics an individual's voice using minimal audio samples. Although voice synthesis technologies offer important opportunities for accessibility and communication support, their growing availability also raises emerging concerns for school health and digital safety. We argue that artificial voice cloning represents a distinct challenge within educational settings because it directly exploits one of the most trusted markers of personal identity: the human voice.

Unlike many visual deepfakes or text-based forms of misinformation, voice cloning can create the illusion of authentic interpersonal communication. Recent evidence suggests that individuals often struggle to reliably distinguish AI-generated voices from authentic speech (1). Within school communities, this capability may facilitate convincing impersonation of students, teachers, parents, or administrators. For example, a cloned teacher's voice could be used to distribute false instructions, a fabricated parental message could mislead school personnel, or a student's voice could be manipulated to create humiliating or defamatory content. Such scenarios highlight how voice cloning may undermine trust in routine communication systems that are essential to educational functioning.

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by identity formation, heightened emotional sensitivity, and an increasing reliance on peer acceptance and a sense of belonging. Consequently, digital threats that manipulate personal identity may exert disproportionately harmful effects on adolescents' psychological well-being and social functioning. Although empirical research specifically examining artificial voice cloning in school settings remains scarce, evidence from the broader literature on cyberbullying, digital impersonation, and AI-enabled deepfakes suggests that synthetic voice technologies represent an emerging risk to school health. By enabling highly convincing impersonation, voice cloning may facilitate identity manipulation, reputational damage, emotional distress, and interpersonal conflict while undermining students' trust in digital communication and authentic social interactions (2, 3).

The implications extend beyond the dissemination of misinformation. Unlike conventional text-based cyberbullying, AI-generated voice clones can reproduce an individual's vocal identity, emotional tone, and familiar speech patterns, thereby increasing the perceived authenticity and persuasive power of fabricated messages. Such realism may intensify the psychological consequences of digital harassment, including anxiety, humiliation, social isolation, and diminished trust among peers, teachers, and families. Emerging scholarship further suggests that AI-driven deepfakes pose unique challenges for educational institutions because they blur the boundary between authentic and fabricated communication, complicating

detection, accountability, and timely intervention. As generative AI technologies continue to evolve, schools should regard artificial voice cloning not merely as a technological innovation. Still, as an emerging school health concern requiring proactive digital literacy initiatives, ethical governance, updated cyberbullying policies, and interdisciplinary research to inform evidence-based prevention strategies (3).

At the same time, voice-cloning technologies should not be viewed solely through a risk-oriented lens. Ethical applications may support students with speech impairments, neurodevelopmental conditions, or other communication difficulties by facilitating participation and inclusion in educational environments (4, 5). However, such benefits should be accompanied by clear safeguards, including informed consent procedures, transparent disclosure of AI-generated speech, and robust protections for voice data.

Given these emerging challenges, several practical actions deserve consideration within school health practice. First, schools should strengthen AI literacy initiatives that help students and staff critically evaluate synthetic media. Second, institutions should establish verification procedures for voice-based communications involving sensitive information or decision-making. Third, school policies should explicitly address unauthorized voice cloning, impersonation, and the misuse of synthetic media. Finally, incident-response mechanisms should be developed to support individuals affected by voice-based deception or harassment.

As generative AI technologies continue to evolve, artificial voice cloning warrants particular attention because of its capacity to imitate a highly trusted form of human communication. Protecting student well-being, privacy, and institutional trust will require educational systems to balance innovation with safeguards that ensure the responsible use of synthetic voice technologies.

Authors' Contribution

Genesis G. Genelza is the sole author of this letter to the editor.

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