

AI and Journalism: Exploring Ethics, Transparency and Self-Regulation among Pakistani TV Journalists

Adeeba Akhtar¹, Naeem Ullah Tariq², Aqeel Ahmed³, Nur Nadia Abd Mubin⁴

¹Lecturer, Department of Media & Communication Studies, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan

²PhD Scholar, School of Media & Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), Shanghai, China

³Assistant Professor, Department of Media & Communication Studies, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan

⁴Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication and Media, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

Correspondence: naemutariq@sjtu.edu.cn²

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Newsrooms are increasingly integrating artificial intelligence (AI) for their news operations in the evolving journalistic landscape. The journalists have started realizing AI as a collaborative assistant that can facilitate them in effective execution of their professional tasks. Despite various prospects, adoption of AI may pose several challenges for the journalism professionals including that of ethical implications, transparency and self-regulation to ensure objectivity.

Methodology: Guided by the social responsibility theory, this research has analyzed integration of AI into newsroom operations with its implications for media ethics. This qualitative study involved in-depth interviews of 13 journalists, dealing with the news operations at various levels in Pakistani TV News Organizations (Urdu/English Channels). While reaching the data saturation, the documented responses were thematically analyzed.

Findings: The findings of the research reveal that Pakistani TV journalists face ethical challenges related to information bias, public opinion influence, human judgement, professional autonomy, and lack of appropriate legal and global regulatory framework in the age of AI.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the journalists are aware of the challenges posed by AI technologies with the consideration for their cautious execution.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Newsroom Ethics, Pakistani TV Journalists, Information Bias, Transparency and Self-regulation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of professional setups in various industries. AI-based technologies permit replication of human cognition, decision-making competence, and problem-solving abilities (Gutiérrez-Caneda et al., 2023). Media industries have always been adaptive to and influenced by the changing technologies (Verhoef et al., 2019). Today, the media industries including

journalism are increasingly incorporating AI techniques to create content, produce news, distribute media content, and engage audience. AI-driven machines automate various journalistic tasks in the newsroom, previously carried out by human beings, increasing the efficiency of news processes (Huang & Rust, 2021), while minimizing human involvement. These modern technologies have revolutionized the work routines in the newsrooms, helping the journalists in creating news articles, simplifying intricate writings, and converting content into easily understandable news while consuming lesser time (Cools & Koliska, 2024; Peña-Alonso et al., 2025). The rise of AI technologies has revolutionized the field of journalism (Al-Zoubi et al., 2024).

The journalists may garner significant advantages by integrating AI tools with their professional tasks. But such integration can pose significant challenges. AI technologies are capable of automating daily journalistic routines but may create challenges for the journalists including job insecurity, and threat to sustainability of human-oriented profession (Bastian et al., 2021). Today, it is imperative for the journalists to get ready for the era, marked by advanced AI technologies and prepare for a mechanism to adopt and survive with fast-paced professional trends. However, a number of traditional journalists are failing to cope up with the tech-oriented challenges of the modern times (Guanah et al., 2020; Talabi et al., 2024).

While AI integration in professional journalistic landscape is evident globally, the ethical concerns have emerged at various levels of news processes (Rudolph et al., 2023). News automation brings forth the ethical challenge regarding objectivity, accuracy, authenticity, transparency, and ownership. There is dire need to formulate the regulatory/self-regulatory mechanism that might assist the responsible use of artificial intelligence in journalism (Situmorang, 2024).

This study is aimed at investigating the challenges involving ethics, transparency, and self-regulation with respect to AI adoption among Pakistani journalists.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this era, the AI technologies prevail almost in all segments of social and professional life due to facilitation they offer to make infrastructures more efficient and effective. The use of AI in journalism highlights many aspects ranging from headline and visuals generation, news-making, translation, summation of text, extracting key information and detecting trending topics (Cools & Kolishka, 2024). With the advent AI technologies in the media industry that offered a lot of facilitation in various domain ranging from planning media content to production and execution of media projects, the scholars have shown concern about the ethical issues and professional challenges faced by the journalists while performing various professional tasks. The critics often question the credibility and authenticity of AI-generated news articles and media productions (Raja & Al-Baghli, 2025). The use of AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and others have raised concerns among the media practitioners about the impact on content quality and production (Lendvai, 2025) and also questions about the standard, security, data ownership and privacy (Pavlik, 2023).

Noain-Sánchez (2022) argues that though AI enhances journalistic potential many folds, it also encounters various obstacles that may slow down its development due to lack of proper training as well as resistance from the workers. Misri et al. (2025) opine that there exists a lack of knowledge about AI usage among the journalists that leads them to failure in assessing the ethical implications of AI-generated content, automation and algorithmic biases. Many scholars believe that integration of AI in the journalism has transformed the professional mindset of the journalists and challenged the traditional ethics of newsrooms (Opdahl et al., 2023). Automated news writing, content recommendations and algorithmic biases often influence decisions taken in the newsrooms. Consequently, the traditional newsroom ethics including objectivity, impartiality, and fact-checking have been reported as compromised (Simon, 2024).

Various studies reveal that the usage of AI in the field of journalism has not been standardized, yet the journalistic routines revolving around AI, follow a growing trend. Despite AI being naïve technology, it

has started reshaping newsroom structures in terms of production and distribution, and redefining the business models of media organizations (Park & Yoon, 2024).

Many researchers have studied the use of AI in journalism in terms of automation and data driven news production (Dwivedi et al., 2023). However, a limited attention has been paid to the ethical aspects, transparency and self-regulation among the journalists in the Age of AI. Hence, the current study builds a case around Pakistani newsrooms to explore the aspects of ethics, transparency and self-regulation among the journalists.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study has been guided by the Social Responsibility Theory, a normative approach in media and communication that deals with the notion that media has an obligation to serve the public interest by providing authentic, objective and balanced information. Furthermore, it acknowledges media freedom from strict state control and censorship except a regulatory check, it has to responsibly act for the social good. With more and more integration of AI technologies with traditional journalism practices, the basic principles of social responsibility theory have become more significant (Gunaratne & Hasim, 1996). Although the use of AI has significantly increased the efficiency of news production and reporting, it has raised the concerns about ethics, accuracy, self-regulation among the journalists as well as misinformation. In view of the conceptions of social responsibility theory, the journalists are required to ensure that any AI-generated work must be monitored and verified carefully. Human supervision is also important so that new technologies assist the journalists rather than taking the control of the newsroom. Transparency in the process of AI usage to assist the journalistic tasks can ensure credibility and enhance the audience trust.

2.2 Research Question

- RQ1. What are the experiences of the Pakistani journalists about AI adoption in the newsroom settings?
- RQ2. How do Pakistani journalists deal with the challenges involving ethics, transparency and self-regulation with respect to AI adoption?

3. METHODOLOGY

Guided by the interpretivist research paradigm, the study adopted qualitative research approach to conduct in-depth interviews of the Pakistani journalists and documented journalists' experiences about adoption of AI in the newsroom settings. The qualitative approach allowed the researchers to understand how the study participants interpreted and made sense of the adoption and utilization of AI tools in news production processes.

While applying convenient sampling technique, the researchers approached about 90 active journalists with more than 10 years of newsroom and news reporting experiences out of which 20 agreed to be part of the study. However, the researchers reached data saturation after documenting 13 respondents. Other than the years of experience, the inclusion criteria included the professional role played by the journalists (news director, news editor, assignment editor, news reporter, copy/content writer, type of media organizations the journalists work with (Urdu/English TV), and hands on experience of AI usage. The process helped ensured participation of different editorial environment as well as technological experiences. The purpose was to investigate the opinion of the journalists about adoption of AI in Pakistani newsrooms as well as the challenges they faced about ethics, transparency, and self-regulation in the given context.

The interviews were conducted during January-June 2026. The researchers employed a semi-structured questionnaire. The face validity and content validity were carried out through evaluation by the subject experts. Each interview lasted from 50 to 60 minutes.

Table 1: The Demographic Profile of the Study Participants

Sr.	Experience (Years)	Journalist's Professional Role	Type of Media Organization
1	21	News Director	Television (English)
2	20	News Editor	Television (Urdu)
3	18	News Editor	Television (Urdu)
4	15	Assignment Editor	Television (Urdu)
5	19	News Director	Television (Urdu)
6	13	Assignment Editor	Television (English)
7	14	News Reporter	Television (Urdu)
8	13	News Reporter	Television (Urdu)
9	11	News Reporter	Television (Urdu)
10	12	Copy/Content Writer	Television (English)
11	12	Copy/Content Writer	Television (Urdu)
12	11	Copy/Content Writer	Television (Urdu)
13	16	News Reporter	Television (Urdu)

The table 1 demonstrates the demographic profile of the study participants. The study considered professional experience of the journalists, their current designation / status in the media organization, and the type of media organization (Urdu/English TV) they serve. The researchers collected responses from the journalists with more than 10 years of professional experience. The sample made up a pool that was inclusive of news directors, news editors, assignment editors, news reporters, and copy / content writers in the newsroom settings of the television media organizations of Pakistan.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers used thematic analysis in order to explore the perspective of the Pakistani TV journalists working in various capacities in the Pakistani media considering ethics, transparency and self-Regulation among them in the age of AI. The thematic analysis has been one of the most common qualitative data analysis techniques adopted the researchers (Dawadi, 2020). This study used six-step systematic scheme proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) that involves data acquaintance, code assignment, theme designing, theme revision, theme finalization, example quotation. This scheme has also been adopted by many other researchers for qualitative studies (Ahmed et al., 2024) while carrying out research focusing Pakistani TV journalists. This data analysis method enables the scholars to use a systematic investigation of the connotations and patterns that exist in the available dataset (Nowell et al., 2017).

1. **Data Acquaintance / Familiarization:** The researchers thoroughly read the interview transcripts over and again, noted down the initial emerging patterns, and recorded reflexive observations within the available text. In the interview transcripts, the recurring concerns included algorithmic influence on the media audiences, unverifiable or biased inputs, excessive reliance on AI by the journalists that may weaken their professional judgements, and the uncertainty surrounding laws and accountability.
2. **Code Assignment / Generation of the Initial Codes.** After data familiarization, the researchers extensively worked on code assignment / generation of the initial codes. The illustrative codes that emerged out of the excerpts of interviews from the Pakistani TV journalists included
 - a. AI may reproduce and strengthen the already existing partisan bias.
 - b. Source origin and attribution remains unclear.
 - c. Verification of information is essential for credibility of journalism
 - d. AI and Human contributions should be combined.
 - e. Algorithms shape political attitudes in the society.
 - f. Editorial control must remain intact and shouldn't be ceded.

- g. AI cannot document local context.
 - h. Automation reduces originality.
 - i. Use of AI needs disclosure.
 - j. Regulations and guidelines on AI use are absent.
 - k. Human oversight on AI use remains necessary.
3. **Theme Designing / Searching for themes:** The researchers grouped the related codes into the broader schemes of shared meaning. Bias, verification, source quality, and human-AI interaction and the credibility of AI-driven news, the algorithmic recommendations and the political influence over public opinion were considered.
 4. **Theme revision:** The researchers checked for internal coherence of every theme, its distinction from the other themes, and the support from the coded extracts as well as the full dataset. They reviewed themes against the original interview transcripts, including the accounts that qualified or contradicted the dominant patterns.
 5. **Theme finalization/ Naming the themes:** The researchers stated the central concepts of each theme as reflected at table 2. The extracted themes are analytical in nature rather than just being the descriptive labels.
 6. **Report writing with examples:** The researchers have presented an evidence-supported account, have used quotations as illustrations and explained how the presented themes answered the main research question.

Table 2: *The Coding Framework*

Extracted input from the Respondents' data	Preliminary Codes	Potential Theme
AI-driven data may potentially be manipulated	Challenges related to reproduction of partisan bias persist	Scrutiny and credibility
Reliable and authentic sources of information are crucial to media credibility	Attribution reinforces credibility	Scrutiny and credibility
News content including text, images, and videos may potentially be used without any authenticity checks	Unconfirmed AI-driven material	Scrutiny and credibility
Both human beings and AI alone cannot sufficiently ensure quality	Human–AI complementarity	Scrutiny and credibility; human judgement
Algorithms may affect war-related views and political opinions	Algorithmic impact on political perception	Public opinion and algorithmic curation
AI shouldn't take control over newsroom flows and audiences' content consumption choices	Editorial check and control over content distribution	Public opinion and algorithmic curation
AI may potentially produce news headlines without localized	Context-insensitive automation	Human oversight and autonomy

context		
Dependence on AI-assisted suggestions can hinder creativity and diversity	Erosion of originality	Human oversight and autonomy
Journalists lack concrete guidance and require transparency in AI use	Governance gap	Governance vacuum
Ai-driven media outputs require editorial oversight and fact-checking	Human responsibility for legality	Scrutiny and credibility; governance vacuum

Table 2 presents data that was extracted out of the interview manuscripts, the preliminary codes assigned by the researchers while coding data and potential initial themes that emerged out of this data.

Table 3: *Thematic structure*

Theme	Central organizing concept	Illustrative subthemes / codes
1. Credibility is conditional to scrutiny of AI's information inputs and outputs	AI-driven news is considered as trustworthy if its sources, provided data, and verification is credible and the journalists remain responsible to check for bias and provenance.	1. Partisan /manipulated data 2. Uncertain source authenticity 3. Fact-checking 4. Credibility 5. Human–AI complementarity
2. Algorithmic curation is the editorial power with capacity of shaping public opinion	Journalists' concern is not merely what AI generates, but also how the algorithmic systems choose and circulate news content, potentially persuading audiences beyond evident editorial supervision.	1. Political and social influence 2. Inappropriate news content reaching audiences 3. Editorial control 4. Professional ethics 5. Audience perception
3. Automation risk and speed displacing appropriate human judgement	AI may back efficiency, but the newsroom dependence on automated output may deteriorate contextual accuracy, creativity, editorial autonomy, and diversity.	1. Pressure to publish quickly 2. Weak local/cultural context 3. Limits in sensitive reporting 4. Reduced originality 5. Uniform content
4. Governance void leaves responsibility without strong defenses.	Journalists must oversee AI-driven output, however report insufficient rules for disclosure, verification, accountability, and legitimate use.	1. Lack of local/global guidance 2. AI-use transparency 3. Human oversight 4. Output legitimacy 5. Trust and accountability.

The themes presented at Table 3 relate to each other but are not interchangeable. Theme 1 deals with the epistemic quality of the information and its attribution. Similarly, Theme 2 revolves around distribution of news and influence of editorial power. Likewise, Theme 3 discusses the professional journalistic practices and judgements. Moreover, Theme 4 relates to the institutional rules and responsibilities around AI use in newsrooms.

4.1 Theme Description

The data presented at Table 2 reflects that the ethical concerns of the Pakistani TV journalists about AI-driven news can be organized around a broader canvas that states that, “AI may proliferate the speediness and outreach of the newsroom functions, but its application can weaken the traditional editorial independence, human scrutiny, and accountability that ensure journalistic credibility”. The respondents did not consider AI merely as either harmful or beneficial. Rather, they labelled its legality as conditional to contextual judgement, human verification, and strong professional defenses.

Theme 1: Credibility is conditional to scrutiny of AI’s information inputs and outputs

The study participants raised questions about AI-driven or AI-generated news stating whether it could be trusted when the underlying information sources might be manipulated, biased, or hard to identify. Interviewee 1 raised a concern about using partisan material that could lead journalists to be “part of the biasness” stating that it reveals that the ethical risks are not limited to the tools of producing inaccurate answers as well as the concerns about journalists’ potential engagement in reproducing a particular perspective of framing. Similarly, the Interviewee 4 stressed upon identification of reliable sources that could serve as a basis for credibility of AI outlet. Likewise, the Interviewees 3 and 5 were concerned about use of images, texts, and videos in the newsroom that could outpace check on information authenticity. The theme 1 accounts situation verification and source attribution as ongoing journalistic responsibilities rather than merely the tasks that may be delegated to any particular AI tool. Participant 10 opined that AI or human effort alone cannot sufficiently add to a balancing perspective. AI may support gathering and producing news. However, its outputs need human scrutiny. The theme 1 advocates for conditional acceptance of AI in view of its contribution being potentially useful, but requiring human scrutiny as the information gathered cannot be considered as self-validating.

Theme 2: Algorithmic curation is the editorial power with capacity of shaping public opinion

The respondents also pointed out concerns about algorithmic influence on the media audiences and how it can shape public opinion. The Interviewee 12 associated algorithmic influence to audience views on decisions about war, and political support, and cautioned that inappropriate content can be shown to the wrong audience. The interviewee 13 called for algorithms not to have “full control” over audience choices of content access as it reflects a concern about the editorial power shifting from overt professional decisions toward covert and lesser transparent systems. The theme reveals all participants opposed application of AI to take complete control of the news flow in the newsroom, demonstrating a shared normative boundary. Analytically, this perspective runs beyond algorithmic selection shaping issue salience, content accuracy, and audience perception.

Theme 3: Automation risk and speed displacing appropriate human judgement

The study participants acknowledged the capacity of AI in assisting faster reporting, but also questioned whether speedy content production and distribution can be afforded at the expense of the editorial judgement. Interviewee 8 considered dependence on AI as a factor that influences editorial judgement. Similarly, interviewee 9 pointed out a limitation about AI-generated news headlines as the generalized news patterns may not be able to align with the political and socio-cultural context of Pakistani society. Moreover, Interviewee 12 stressed upon the importance of critical thinking and human emotions in news reporting about sensitive issues including religion, politics and national interest. Such concerns extend beyond personal errors to the professional competencies over time. The study participants expressed their concerns about AI usage in newsrooms, commenting that reliance on automated suggestions for idea generation, news writing, and issue framing may reduce creative contribution by the journalists. Thus, theme 3 demonstrates that AI does not necessarily remove human judgement, but newsroom pressure and the habitual dependence can gradually limit the space in which contextual understanding, judgement, and originality are applied.

Theme 4: Governance void leaves responsibility without strong defenses

The study participants highlighted a discrepancy between the speedy integration of AI and the absence of adequately clear legal framework for its application in journalism. They stressed upon practical and transparent guidance regarding AI assistance, and establishment of standards to help the journalist community in application of tools. Interviewee 3 noted that the journalists are held responsible for news monitoring but they suffer uncertainty due to lack of guidance on AI-driven content. Interviewees 2, 5, 6, 11 and 13 opined that the concerned authorities should devise and update the recommendations in view of developing technologies and their application in journalism. Interviewee 7 highlighted the matters related to computational capacity and legitimacy stating that processing large data sets speedily does not define any output authentic, publishable and reliable without editorial oversight and fact-checking. Disclosure of AI assistance is considered as a way forward to gain audience confidence whereas human oversight and verification are portrayed as requirements for responsible publication. This theme, therefore, advocated for the establishment of regulations about the application of AI in journalism as well as the responsible distribution of new contents to the audience.

4.2 Findings of the Study

Across the description on four themes of the study, the fundamental patterns demonstrate a dire need AI-assisted by human-accountable journalism. The study participants welcomed the use of AI as a supportive application for gathering information and production of news, but opposed it to becoming and self-governing authority over facts gathering, framing of issues, and news circulation. The respondents shared three different types of interconnected concerns about trustworthiness and credibility of information, safeguarding the professional judgement, and the accessibility of the institutional safeguards. They viewed that the audience trust is reliant upon not on implementing AI alone, but also on developing capacity to establish that AI-driven content has been authentically sourced, counter-checked, contextualized, and supervised by the journalists operating under transparent legal standards.

5. DISCUSSION

The study focused on exploring ethical perspective of AI use in Pakistani media as well as the overall current trend and need for transparency in its use in the Pakistani newsrooms. Furthermore, the research also investigated the trend of self-Regulation among the Pakistani TV journalists. The findings of the study highlighted that information data bias, absence of proper local legislation and international regulations pose main challenges to the journalists when it comes to adoption of AI technologies in the Pakistani newsroom settings. The interview discussions highlighted that AI-driven media technologies and news processes are under continuous development process that make it difficult for the Pakistani TV journalists to completely rely on the facilities offered by these tools. The sensitive nature of the profession makes it binding for the journalists to avoid subjectivity and bias, remain neutral and impartial, and safeguard privacy standards. The findings of the study fall in conformity with the existing literature (Shin et al., 2022).

The use and application of the AI-driven tools and processes in journalism can also raise ethical concerns with respect to content capabilities, specifically in shaping public opinion. This is mainly due to algorithmic influence over content distribution through the continuous repetition of the content placement with an aim of its online promotion. The study participants emphasized the necessity of presenting news with various perspectives, and not just limiting it to a single viewpoint to which AI can be used as a supportive tool under human supervision (Calice et al., 2021; Yuhanyin, 2019).

The research findings also revealed that access to the news content has no longer been universal as with the advent of AI, algorithm controls what type of content is to be shown to the audience. This process often leads to exclusion of various types of media content that may not fall in conformity with the audience preferences and needs. Thus, the algorithm-driven systems lead to inequality in how the news stories are unfolded before the audience. Consequently, various important news items do not reach to the

public as widely as sensational or entertaining news stories do. Sreerama and Krishnamoorthy (2022) opined that in the absence of substantial rules and regulations, algorithms may bring forth unfair and biased content, which may reinforce the existing social inequalities embedded in the data. The study participants highlighted the need for legislation at the national level as well as the internationally-recognized rules and regulations to streamline and regulate journalistic use of AI to ensure content neutrality and objectivity as advocated. Bastian et al. (2021) also emphasized the need to regulate the application of AI in journalism.

6. CONCLUSION

This qualitative study adopted in-depth interviews as a research method to explore the perspective of Pakistani TV journalists about the ethical aspects, transparency in usage of and self-regulation while using AI in the newsroom settings. The findings of the study demonstrated four themes including credibility is conditional to scrutiny of AI's information inputs and outputs; algorithmic curation is the editorial power with capacity of shaping public opinion; automation risk and speed displacing appropriate human judgement; and governance void leaves responsibility without strong defenses. The study concluded that there is a dire need of AI-assisted journalism under the supervision of human beings. Moreover, the use of AI as a supportive application for gathering of information and production of news may be maintained, but considering its self-governing authority over facts gathering, framing of issues, and news circulation should not be entertained as human scrutiny is fundamental to ensure quality journalism.

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ORCID iDs

Adeeba Akhtar¹  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0826-3019>

Naeem Ullah Tariq²  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7713-3971>

Aqeel Ahmed³  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5407-560X>

Nur Nadia Abd Mubin⁴  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6323-8976>

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