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Local Journalists' Perception of the Use of Artificial Intelligence in News Production: A Case Study in Surakarta City

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Abstract - The development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has significantly impacted journalistic practices, including at the local level. This study explores the perceptions of journalists in Surakarta City regarding the benefits, challenges, and ethical implications of AI use in news production. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with five journalists from various media platforms. The findings reveal that journalists view AI as a supporting tool that accelerates work processes and enhances production efficiency. However, concerns about the degradation of information quality and potential violations of journalistic ethics remain critical issues. AI acceptance is influenced by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and the professionalism values upheld by journalists. This study recommends strengthening digital literacy and updating journalistic ethical regulations to address the challenges of media transformation in the era of artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Journalism; News Production; Ethics; Media Transformation

Introduction

Advances in digital technology have become an undeniable driving force in the transformation of various aspects of human life, including in the field of communication and informatics. These developments bring fundamental changes to the way humans interact, search and distribute information. One of the most significant impacts of these advancements is media convergence, where the boundaries between conventional and digital media are increasingly blurred. Conventional media such as newspapers, magazines and television are losing their appeal among the public, especially the younger generation who are more familiar with internet-based digital media (AFP, 2023).

This phenomenon is further strengthened by the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) technology that has now entered various lines of life, including journalism. AI is present not only as a technical tool, but also as an entity capable of producing narratives or news content automatically and in a very short time. The speed and efficiency offered by AI have raised concerns among professional journalists. They began to question the sustainability of the journalism profession in the midst of increasingly massive technological advances. The fear of human journalists being replaced by intelligent machines has become a hotly discussed discourse in various professional forums (AFP, 2023).

The results of a study conducted by Journalism AI London School of Economics in 2023 showed that more than 60% of media organizations in 46 countries expressed concerns about the ethical impact of using AI in journalism, including on the aspects of accuracy, fairness, and transparency of information (Beckett in AFP, 2023). However, some see AI not only as a threat, but also as an opportunity to boost the efficiency and effectiveness of news production. The use of AI to produce routine news such as weather reports or sports results, as The Washington Post did with the Heliograf program, is an example of how AI can be used positively in supporting the work of journalists (Sinaga, 2023).

In Indonesia, the use of AI in journalism has also begun to receive attention. Online media outlet Beritagar.id pioneered the use of robot journalism by utilizing Machine Learning (ML) and Natural Language Processing (NLP)-based technologies to collect and process data into news automatically (Amran & Irwansyah, 2018). The use of this technology marks a significant transformation of in the editorial work process, although it is not free from challenges, such as potential algorithm bias, information accuracy, and the absence of ethical elements in the content production process.

Not only at the national level, the development of the use of AI in journalism has also spread to the local level, including in Surakarta City, Central Java. The city serves as an interesting example in the context of technology adoption in the local media world. PT Aksara Solopos, as one of the largest media outlets in Surakarta, has experienced a significant shift from print media to digital platforms, with traffic to the Solopos.com website increasing sharply from under 500,000 before the pandemic to between one and four million visitors in the 2022-2023 period (Qurata'ayun, 2023). This change in media consumption patterns encourages local media to accelerate the digital transformation process, including the utilization of AI-based technology.

In addition, the rapid growth of Surakarta in terms of infrastructure, economy, and the organization of various national and international events has further increased the intensity of news coverage in the city. In the midst of these activities, local journalists play an important role in delivering accurate and credible information to the public. However, on the other hand, they are also faced with great challenges in the form of demands to adapt to technological developments, including the use of AI in the news production process.

Ethical issues are a crucial aspect that must be considered in the use of AI in journalism. Along with the widespread use of this technology, concerns about the spread of fake news, manipulation of content, and a decrease in the quality of journalism are increasingly prominent. For this reason, in November 2023, 17 international media organizations and journalists agreed on the Paris Charter on AI and Journalism, an ethical guide for the use of AI in journalism that emphasizes the importance of maintaining the quality, accuracy, and credibility of information disseminated to the public (Sudibyo, 2024).

The phenomenon of AI use in local media, such as in Surakarta City, is interesting to be studied further, especially regarding how local journalists perceive the use of this technology. Do they see AI as a tool that facilitates the work process or as a threat to the existence of their profession? (Aranditio, 2024). A deeper understanding of the perceptions of local journalists is essential to formulate appropriate adaptation strategies, maintain the quality of journalism, and uphold ethical principles in the face of inevitable technological developments.

This study aims to explore local journalists' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using AI in news production, both in terms of news processing and from a journalistic ethics perspective. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical contributions for the media and journalists in facing the era of digitalization, as well as enrich the academic literature on media transformation in the era of artificial intelligence.

Theoretical Framework

The rapid development of digital technology has led to transformations in various aspects of life, including in the field of mass communication. This change is not only related to the way information is produced and distributed, but also affects the role and function of journalists as the main communicators in the process of delivering messages to the public. In the perspective of mass communication, the communication model developed by Lasswell (Severin & Tankard, 1992) is an important reference to understand these dynamics. This model emphasizes five main elements,

namely who conveys the message, what is the content of the message, through what channel the message is conveyed, to whom the message is addressed, and what impact is caused by the communication. This model is relevant to analyze the role of journalists in facing increasingly complex technological disruption, especially with the presence of artificial intelligence (AI).

In the context of news production, the development of AI technology is both a challenge and an opportunity for the journalism profession. On the one hand, AI allows the news production process to be faster and more efficient through the use of algorithms in data collection, writing, and information dissemination. Technologies such as Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Natural Language Generation (NLG) have even been able to automatically generate news content with language structures that resemble the work of professional journalists (Guzman & Lewis, 2019). However, on the other hand, the presence of AI raises concerns regarding information accuracy, algorithmic bias, and the potential loss of ethical values in the journalistic process (Dhiman, 2023).

Journalists' perception of the use of AI is a key factor that determines acceptance or rejection of the technology. Kinicki and Kreitner (2003) explain that perception is a cognitive process that allows individuals to interpret the surrounding environment based on the stimulus received. Factors such as experience, attitudes, expectations, and environmental conditions influence how journalists perceive the benefits and risks posed by the use of AI (Robins, 2005). If journalists perceive AI as a tool that can simplify their tasks without compromising the ethical values of the profession, then this technology is likely to be accepted. Conversely, if AI is perceived as a threat to the existence of the profession and the quality of reporting, resistance will arise.

In relation to the news production process, the news processing stage has undergone fundamental changes in the digital era. Stages including planning, data collection, writing, editing and publication are now increasingly involving AI-based software (Romli, 2012). The role of journalists in determining the news agenda is still needed, but technical processes such as analyzing topic trends, preparing news drafts, and even selecting titles, can be done automatically by algorithm-based systems (Ginting, 2020). This situation poses new challenges for journalists to maintain news quality and integrity amidst the pressure of production efficiency.

Ethical aspects are inevitably debated in this context. The Journalistic Code of Ethics developed by the Indonesian Press Council emphasizes the importance of accuracy, objectivity, fairness and social responsibility in the dissemination of information (Nugroho & Samsuri, 2013). Choliq (2011) emphasized that the practice of journalism must always be based on moral and ethical principles that safeguard the public's right to obtain correct and non-misleading information. The use of AI in journalism, if not accompanied by strict ethical control, is feared to encourage the dissemination of biased and potentially manipulative information.

To further understand journalists' acceptance of AI, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework developed by Davis is a relevant analytical tool. TAM explains that technology adoption is influenced by two main factors, namely perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Wicaksono, 2022). In the context of journalism, if AI is seen as able to increase productivity and simplify work processes, then journalists will tend to be open to its implementation. Conversely, if AI is perceived as complicated and does not provide significant benefits, then acceptance will be low.

Several previous studies have highlighted the ethical challenges in the implementation of AI in journalism. Torrijos (2021) emphasized the need to strengthen ethics in the use of this technology so as not to sacrifice journalistic quality and integrity. Meanwhile, Porlezza and Ferri (2022) highlighted the tendency of the media to focus more on economic efficiency in the implementation of AI, without seriously considering the ethical and social impacts. Similar findings were also presented by Aliffudin (2024) who examined the use of AI avatars as news anchors on tvOne. The study concluded that although AI technology is used, the data validation process is still carried out by human journalists so that it does not conflict with the Journalistic Code of Ethics.

Furthermore, Amran and Irwansyah (2018) in their research on the implementation of robot journalism at Beritagar.id found that although this technology is able to produce content automatically, the role of human journalists is still needed to ensure the quality and ethics of the content produced. These findings show that although AI can speed up the news production process, the role of humans in maintaining quality, validity, and ethical values remains irreplaceable.

Thus, this literature review shows that the issue of AI application in journalism is a complex phenomenon, involving consideration of technological aspects, ethics, and individual perceptions.

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of how local journalists interpret the existence of AI is important to study, in order to formulate adaptation strategies that are in line with technological developments while maintaining the integrity of the journalistic profession.

Theoretical background contains previous theories as the basis of research and the temporary hypothesis. The theory can be in the form of scientific articles, articles in journals, textbooks, or other sources of scientific writing. This theory will be used to provide state of the art of your manuscript from research problems that have been proposed. The theory that should be used primarily is the theory related to communications. Other theories that are still needed to solve the problem of research to support theories that are delivered after the theory of communication is discussed.

Material and Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand local journalists' perceptions of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the news-making process. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is considered capable of exploring journalists' experiences, views and responses to phenomena that occur naturally in their work environment (Moleong, 2013). The case study design is also considered relevant for answering exploratory research questions, such as "how" and "why" the phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2003). The research location was set in Surakarta City, considering that this city is the center of local media activities that have undergone significant digital transformation.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with journalists who have at least ten years of experience and understand the issue of AI use in journalistic practice. The informant selection technique used a purposive sampling method that allows researchers to select subjects based on certain criteria according to research needs (Pawito, 2007). The data obtained were analyzed using an explanation-building technique aimed at building a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of journalists' perceptions of AI implementation (Yin, 2003). Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, by verifying information from various informants with different media backgrounds to ensure data validity (Yin, 2003).

Results and Discussion

Journalists' Awareness of the Use of AI in News Production

The development of information technology, especially artificial intelligence (AI), has presented both challenges and opportunities for journalism. Based on the interview results, the majority of informants realized that AI has begun to take a role in the news production process. This is in line with Severin and Tankard's (1992) opinion in the mass communication model, which states that the media acts as the main channel in conveying messages to the audience, and technological transformation will affect the performance of the channel.

In this context, the presence of AI is understood by journalists as a technology that supports the effectiveness of editorial work, especially in the process of checking plagiarism, improving SEO, and presenting data quickly and accurately. Informant 1, a senior journalist at Suara Merdeka, stated:

> "So for example we want to check the news. When we type the news, is there anything the same? So for example we want to rewrite a news story, to check whether what we rewrite is already different or the term has become a new writing, or is still considered plagiarism. That can be seen through AI" (Informant 1).

This statement shows that journalists have utilized AI to fulfill the principles of accuracy and authenticity in the news they produce. This is in line with Article 3 of the Journalistic Code of Ethics, which requires journalists to report in a balanced manner and test information.

However, not all journalists show the same level of awareness of AI. Journalists working in conventional media such as television and radio tend to be slower to adopt this technology. This is confirmed by Informant 3 who is more familiar with the presence of AI-based virtual presenters than the use of AI in technical editorial processes.

Benefits of AI in the News Production Process

Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework (Wicaksono, 2022), perceived usefulness is an important factor driving the adoption of technology. The findings of this study show

that journalists tend to view AI as a useful tool to speed up the news production process, reduce workload, and increase efficiency.

Informant 2, Radar Solo's content creator, revealed that AI is very helpful in the process of topic research and script editing:

> "We make ChatGPT. Usually to find ideas and sometimes to edit to make it faster too. But the writing is still from journalists" (Informant 2).

This reinforces Guzman and Lewis' (2019) findings that AI in journalism is not only used to process data, but also supports creative aspects such as content ideation. In addition, the use of features such as auto-correct and predictive text in word processing software further speeds up the process of writing news scripts, as stated by Informant 1.

On the other hand, Informant 4 from RRI emphasized that AI cannot replace the aesthetic and artistic aspects of news delivery, especially in audio-based media such as radio. This is relevant to Dhiman's (2023) critique, which states that although AI is capable of producing large amounts of content, the aspects of human value and depth of analysis remain weaknesses that cannot be overcome by technology.

Perceived Ease of Use of AI

In the TAM framework, perceived ease of use is also a key factor influencing technology usage intention. Young journalists who are more familiar with the digital ecosystem tend to adapt more easily to AI technology. This is evident from the regular use of ChatGPT by content creators and content managers at Solopos.

However, for senior journalists like Informant 1, the adoption of AI still requires effort and adaptation.

> "Some things can be learned, but some things are difficult for me. Even though all things can be learned, but some things take effort, take time" (Informant 1).

This opinion is in line with the concept of perception in Kinicki and Kreitner's (2003) theory, which asserts that individuals' experiences, attitudes and readiness influence the way they interpret and respond to technological advances.

Resistance also arises from journalists who think AI does not add significant value to their work process. Informant 3, for example, considers that the use of AI actually slows down the writing process because the settings of AI tools are still dominated by foreign languages and are not fully relevant for the use of Indonesian.

> "Auto correct sometimes doesn't match what we want to write. It makes it weird" (Informant 3).

AI and Journalistic Code of Ethics

One of the important findings in this study is the ethical concern over the use of AI in news processing. Based on a literature review, the excessive use of AI without human control has the potential to violate the Journalistic Code of Ethics, especially in relation to professionalism, accuracy and source protection (Nugroho & Samsuri, 2013).

Informant 5 from Solopos explicitly stated that journalistic works produced entirely by AI contradict the principles of authenticity and professionalism: "We can't. That's plagiarism." (Informant 5). Informant 1 also emphasized that AI was unable to fulfill the ethical and empathetic aspects inherent in journalistic work.

> "Maybe in terms of editing, checking, it can indeed be done. But when it comes to ethics, the style of delivering information, and the values that must be held by a journalist, it cannot be replaced by AI" (Informant 1).

This rejection is relevant to the findings of Torrijos (2021), who stated that the use of AI in journalism must be accompanied by strengthening ethical principles so as not to sacrifice the quality and integrity of the profession.

On the other hand, Informant 2 and Informant 4 proposed a moderate approach. As long as AI only acts as a tool, not as a substitute for the journalistic process that should be carried out by humans, then professional ethics can still be maintained.

Journalists' Attitude towards AI: Threat or Opportunity?

The presence of AI in journalism is perceived ambivalently. Most informants perceive AI as a challenge that cannot be avoided. This view is in line with the concept of technological adaptation, which places AI as a disruptive innovation that drives significant changes in the news production process (Keegan & King, 2017). Informant 1 stated: "I welcome. No problem. AI is something that cannot be rejected. If we reject it, we will become extinct".

However, resistance is still present, especially from journalists who work in traditional media. Informant 4 emphasized that the artistic aspect of radio news presentation cannot be replaced by AI.

> "Radio cannot be replaced by AI, Ma'am. The voice has art, it has expression" (Informant 4).

In contrast to these two views, Informant 5 views AI from the perspective of business relevance. For him, the application of AI must be linked to the business model of the media:

> "So what's the difference when the media makes it and everyone else can too? If it's not relevant to this business, what's the point?" (Informant 5).

Discussion

The results of this study show a close relationship with various concepts and theories in the study of mass communication, information technology, and journalistic ethics. Digital transformation driven by advances in artificial intelligence (AI) has brought significant changes in the news production process, not only in technical aspects, but also in the ethical and professional dimensions of journalists.

In the framework of mass communication, as expressed by Lasswell in his communication model (Severin & Tankard, 1992), the process of delivering an effective message depends on who delivers the message (communicator), what the content of the message is, through what channel the message is delivered, to whom the message is addressed, and what effect it has. The presence of AI in this process has modified almost all of these aspects. AI is not only a tool, but in some cases, plays a direct role in the message creation process. An example is the use of ChatGPT technology that can automatically compose news texts. This raises the critical question of whether AI can also be considered a communicator in the mass communication process or just an instrument of technology.

Furthermore, the perception theory proposed by Kinicki and Kreitner (2003) also provides a relevant explanation regarding how journalists understand and respond to AI. Journalists' perceptions of AI are strongly influenced by their experiences, attitudes, and work environment. Journalists who are familiar with the digital ecosystem and have experience in using technology tend to be more open and adaptive to the presence of AI. Meanwhile, journalists who are more senior and involved in conventional media such as radio and television show a more skeptical attitude and tend to be resistant to the use of AI.

This finding is also in line with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis and popularized by Wicaksono (2022), which asserts that technology acceptance is influenced by two main factors, namely perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Journalists who view AI as a useful tool to increase productivity and simplify work processes are more likely to adopt the technology. Conversely, if AI is perceived as complicated or not suited to practical needs, then resistance to its use will arise.

From the results of the study, it appears that journalists in online and digital media are more likely to adopt AI because they feel the benefits directly in improving work efficiency. AI helps speed up data searches, generate coverage ideas, do editing, and even assist in SEO optimization. However, for journalists in conventional media, such as radio and television, the use of AI is still seen as something that is not very relevant and can even disrupt established work processes.

On the other hand, the debate on the ethical aspects of using AI in journalism is a topic that cannot be ignored. As stated in the Journalistic Code of Ethics (Nugroho & Samsuri, 2013),

journalists must maintain professionalism, accuracy of information, and protect sources. Excessive use of AI, especially in news-making without human involvement, may violate these principles. Some informants even considered that the use of AI in writing news automatically falls into the category of plagiarism and is against the KEJ.

This view is in line with the findings of Torrijos (2021) who emphasized the importance of applying strict ethical principles in the use of AI in the mass media. Without adequate regulation and supervision, the use of AI can damage the quality of journalism and reduce public trust in the media. Moreover, the algorithms used by AI have the potential to carry certain biases because they are programmed based on data that is not always free from political, cultural, or economic preferences.

Conversely, some informants consider that the use of AI is not necessarily against professional ethics, provided that the technology is only used as a tool and does not replace the main role of journalists. This is in line with Porlezza and Ferri's (2022) argument that the ethical challenge in the use of AI lies not in the technology itself, but in how humans manage and supervise the implementation of the technology in the journalistic process.

In this context, serious efforts are needed to revise and update existing media regulations, including the Journalistic Code of Ethics and relevant laws and regulations. New regulations need to be able to meet the challenges of AI technology development and provide clear guidelines on the ethical limits and responsibilities of using AI in journalism.

In addition, increasing digital literacy for journalists is crucial. Not only do journalists need to understand the benefits and potential of AI, but they must also be equipped with the ability to identify potential biases and ethical risks that may arise in the use of such technology. Trainings on the ethical use of AI, data management, and the principle of transparency in algorithms should be part of the professional development of journalists in the digital era.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the presence of AI in journalism is inevitable, but must be faced with adaptation readiness, strengthening the capacity of journalists, and strict supervision to maintain the quality and integrity of the profession. AI should be positioned as a partner that strengthens human capabilities, not as a substitute for the role of journalists in fulfilling the public's right to accurate, balanced and dignified information

Conclusions

The results of this study show that the presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism has become an inevitable phenomenon. Journalists in Surakarta, both those working in digital and conventional media, have different awareness of the presence and role of AI in the news production process. Journalists working in online media are more open and adaptive in using AI to support work productivity, while journalists from conventional media such as radio and television show a more skeptical attitude, even tending to be resistant to the use of this technology.

From a Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) perspective, perceived usefulness and ease of use are the main factors influencing AI adoption in the journalistic process. AI is seen as useful in speeding up the writing, editing, and data search processes, as well as supporting SEO optimization to expand reader reach. However, not all journalists find AI easy to use, especially those who are not familiar with the digital ecosystem.

Ethical issues are a major concern in the discourse on the use of AI in journalism. Uncontrolled use of AI has the potential to violate the Journalistic Code of Ethics, especially regarding professionalism, accuracy of information, protection of sources, and balance of news. However, some journalists argue that AI can still be utilized as long as its use is limited as a tool, not a substitute for the main role of journalists. Thus, AI should be positioned as a partner in improving the performance of journalists, not as a threat to the existence of the profession. The role of humans in maintaining the accuracy, integrity and ethics of the journalistic profession remains irreplaceable, despite the rapid development of technology.

Based on the findings and discussion in this study, there are several suggestions: (1) Strengthening Digital and Technological Literacy for Journalists that not only introduces the use of AI technology, but also equips them with a critical understanding of potential ethical risks and algorithm bias. Strong digital literacy will help journalists utilize AI wisely and responsibly; (2) The development of information technology, especially AI, requires updates to media regulations and the Journalistic Code of Ethics. These revisions must be able to accommodate the new challenges

presented by technology, including the regulation of the use of AI in the news production and reporting process; (3) The mass media needs to establish a strict internal supervision system to control the use of AI in the newsroom. The use of AI should be directed to support the creative process of journalists, not replace the important role of humans in reporting, verifying and analyzing information; (4) The media needs to ensure that journalists remain the main actors in the news production process. AI can be used to support technical and administrative aspects, but substantive aspects such as field coverage, in-depth interviews, and data verification should remain the responsibility of journalists.

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