

Media and AI in the Age of Influence: Journalism, Public Discourse and Countering Violent Extremism

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming journalism - from reporting, verification and translation to content production and distribution. While it offers opportunities to overstretched newsrooms, it also raises serious questions about misinformation, deepfakes, trust, jobs, copyright, editorial accountability, and the growing power of tech platforms.

For Pakistan, the challenges are compounded by limited resources, skills and linguistic inequalities. We need to move beyond the usual AI-as-threat-vs-opportunity debate to ask a bigger question: if AI makes information abundant and increasingly mediates how people access it, what becomes of the distinctive value of journalism, and how do we protect its public interest role? As AI increasingly becomes an intermediary through which people access and understand information, the boundaries between journalist, source, publisher and audience are blurring. Who do we trust when we can no longer easily establish what is real, who produced it and why? What does this mean for journalism and democratic discourse?

The information environment in which media operate has changed faster over the past few years than in the preceding three decades. Pakistan meets this transition at considerable scale, with a population of some [256 million at a median age of 20.6 years](#), 117 million internet users, 79.9 million social media user identities and 194 million active cellular connections. [Research on Pakistani newsrooms](#) finds that around 27% of Pakistanis now rely on social media as their primary news source and that outlets have begun experimenting with audience-facing tools, including a news chatbot launched by a national daily. Young audiences consume news on mobile devices, in several languages, and expect formats shaped by digital platforms.

In Pakistan, these questions also have implications for social cohesion and countering violent extremism (CVE). AI's ability to generate and amplify misleading, polarising, or inflammatory content can shape how communities understand conflict, identity and difference, while credible journalism and media literacy can help create an information environment in which such manipulation is harder to spread.

The objective of this discussion is to explore how Pakistan's media sector can develop and implement a locally grounded, gender-responsive approach to AI that strengthens editorial quality, verification capacity and public trust, while contributing to social cohesion and the prevention of violent extremism. The discussion will draw primarily on Pakistani research and practitioners' experience, covering newsroom adoption, verification and provenance, national language capability, audience literacy, and media role in discourse building on a CVE action framework.

Key questions which will be addressed include:

1. How can Pakistani newsrooms integrate AI into reporting, verification and multilingual publishing to address challenges such as synthetic media and limited verification capacity while maintaining editorial independence, accountability and public trust?

2. What skills, training and access can media houses, journalism schools and CVE practitioners adopt to tackle the training and access gaps documented in Pakistani newsrooms? And how can these opportunities be made more equitable for women and young media professionals?
3. How can AI verification tools and media and information literacy programmes be customised for Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Balochi and Pakistan's other languages, given evidence that existing tools handle idiom and sarcasm poorly, to enhance newsroom capacity and ensure inclusive access to reliable information?
4. How can these approaches, including content provenance standards, national language AI capability and media and information literacy, be integrated into Pakistan's national and sub-national policies, aligning with global frameworks such as UNESCO's [Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence](#), to enhance the scalability and sustainability of quality journalism and CVE actions in Pakistan?
5. How can Pakistan's media sector move from reactive factchecking and correction towards more anticipatory approaches to information manipulation? What role can journalism, media literacy and AI-enabled verification play in protecting long-term information integrity and social cohesion?

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