Changing Nature and Roles of Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Journalism, underscores its role as a pillar of democracy and a watchdog of power, emphasizing functions like informing the public, holding power accountable, and fostering unity. The present study examines the evolving landscape of modern journalism, analyzing its changing nature and shifting roles. Through a comprehensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, the study highlights journalism's dynamic nature and its implications for society. The study reveals significant shifts in journalism's roles due to technology and changing audience behavior, showing how traditional journalism now exists within a complex ecosystem of social media, influencers, and user-generated content. The findings from an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, reveals shifts in the roles of journalism driven by technological advances and evolving audience behavior. It highlights the need for journalistic adaptation to digital platforms and underscores the importance of maintaining transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct to uphold trust and credibility in the media industry.

INTRODUCTION

Journalism encompasses the creation and dissemination of reports on current events, utilizing sources, eyewitness accounts, and research. These reports are distributed through various media including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and online platforms. Mellado (2015) emphasized the role and definition of journalism varies significantly across different governmental systems and depend on the value each country places on a free press. In some nations, the government funds and controls the media, while in others, corporate monopolies may hinder the free flow of information. Despite existing protections for free speech and press, maintaining objectivity in reporting remains a constant challenge due to competing interests among rival news organizations or differing ideological views on free expression. Another influencing factor is the funding of news organizations, which can come from either free-market capitalism or government subsidies, raising questions about impartiality and loyalty.

The general definition of journalism often overlooks the diverse methods for sharing evidence-based information about current events. There are multiple genres of journalism, each presenting evidence in distinct ways.

Advocacy journalism promotes specific perspectives, investigative journalism involves extensive research on sensitive subjects, photojournalism narrates stories through visual media, tabloid journalism focuses on trivial topics, yellow journalism emphasizes sensationalism, gonzo journalism immerses the journalist in the story, and citizen journalism empowers ordinary citizens to document events.

The role of individuals who report the news is perhaps even more varied than the definition of journalism itself. Traditionally, journalists were defined by the print medium that paid their wages. However, with the advent of new delivery methods, the role of journalists has evolved. The literature on the digital age emphasizes its pivotal role in transforming the reporting of facts and events by enabling real-time fact-checking. Christians et al. (2009: 30–31), Hanitzsch (2011), and Willnat et al. (2013) highlighted its impact on journalism, stressing the importance of independent fact-checkers in identifying inconsistencies as they occur. The rise of citizen journalism, where anyone can report news events using smartphones and social media, has further blurred the lines between traditional reporters and the general public.

Ethics play a crucial role in journalism, with the obligation of truthful reporting lying with the individual journalist or their affiliated entity. Adherence to journalistic ethics and moral standards is essential, although it primarily remains a personal decision despite support from news organizations. Objectivity, involving the pursuit and presentation of truth without bias, is an ideal that journalists strive for, but modern journalism often trends towards producing content that caters to specific audience biases, leading to a loss of trust.

Gatekeepers, such as editors and news managers, serve as a defense against unethical, illegal, or biased reporting. They oversee coverage and content, providing checks for accuracy and context. Legal teams and publishers may also play a role in protecting news coverage of sensitive issues. The history of journalism in India reveals its evolution and adaptation to changing contexts, from the fight for independence to the digital age. Journalism has played a crucial role in disseminating news, shaping public opinion, and holding those in power accountable. The media has the capacity to shape public perception, stimulate conversations, and influence the collective mindset of a nation. Journalists aim to present factual information, delve

into nuances, and highlight diverse perspectives through their reporting.

In India, with its vast diversity, the role of media is even more crucial. Journalists have a duty to represent a broad spectrum of voices and perspectives. In the digital age, media literacy is essential for critically evaluating information and engaging in constructive discussions. Journalism's impact on public opinion involves providing context, analysis, and interpretation of events, with investigative journalism playing a key role in uncovering hidden truths and holding those in power accountable.

Journalism is fundamentally about creating and sharing reports on current events, relying on sources, eyewitness accounts, and thorough research. These reports are disseminated through various media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and online platforms.

The role and definition of journalism can vary significantly depending on the governmental systems in place and the value each country places on a free press. In some nations, the government funds and controls the media, while in others, corporate monopolies may hinder the free dissemination of information. Despite existing free speech and press protections, maintaining objectivity in reporting remains a constant challenge due to competing interests among rival news organizations and differing ideological views on free expression.

Journalism encompasses various styles, presenting evidence uniquely. Sue Careless (2000) highlighted that, Advocacy journalism promotes specific perspectives, investigative journalism delves into sensitive topics through extensive research, and photojournalism tells stories through visual media.

Tabloid journalism focuses on trivial topics like celebrity gossip, while yellow journalism emphasizes sensationalism and often lacks verified sources.

Gonzo journalism involves reporters immersing themselves in stories, expressing their opinions, and prioritizing personal narratives over accuracy. Citizen journalism, enabled by digital technology, allows ordinary citizens to document events and public figures, providing context and facts that major news outlets might miss. However, it also poses risks related to paparazzi and sensationalism.

Bartsch & Schneider (2014) highlighted the profound role of journalists which has evolved significantly, especially in the digital age. Traditionally, journalists were defined by the print medium that paid their wages.

Today, with new delivery methods, the lines between traditional news reporters and the general public have blurred. Citizen journalists, bloggers, d influencers often report news faster than professional news crews, complicating the issue of who can receive official credentials. Independent journalists must navigate legal risks, including plagiarism, fabrication, libel, and defamation, in the absence of editorial supervision.

Most journalists would likely describe their role as a public service, aimed at informing the public about significant news, such as severe weather events, crimes, political issues, and controversies.

Despite tight deadlines, pressure from funders, and audience scrutiny, journalists bear the crucial responsibility of reporting events ethically.

The Society of Professional Journalists has established four key guidelines in its code of ethics: Seek Truth and Report It, Minimize Harm, Act Independently, and Be Accountable and Transparent. These principles emphasize the importance of accurate information, neutrality, minimizing harm, maintaining independence, and transparency in reporting.

Vaibhav Chakraborty (2019) underscores the complex framework of Indian democracy, emphasizing the role of media which serves as a crucial pillar, upholding transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment. Indian journalism has historically played a key role in shaping public opinion and promoting unity among diverse communities.

However, the media's role in a democracy comes with significant challenges, including pressures related to ratings, competition, and commercial interests. Protecting press freedom and the safety of journalists is vital for maintaining the integrity of journalism and the health of democracy.

Basic Principles of Journalism
When one of the famous authors posed the question, "What is the role of a reporter?" to a group of journalism students, several common themes emerged in their responses.

- To educate and provide information
- To report truthfully and confirm facts
- To advocate for those who lack a voice
- To reflect various communities and viewpoints
- To act as a guardian, ensuring those in power and large corporations are held responsible
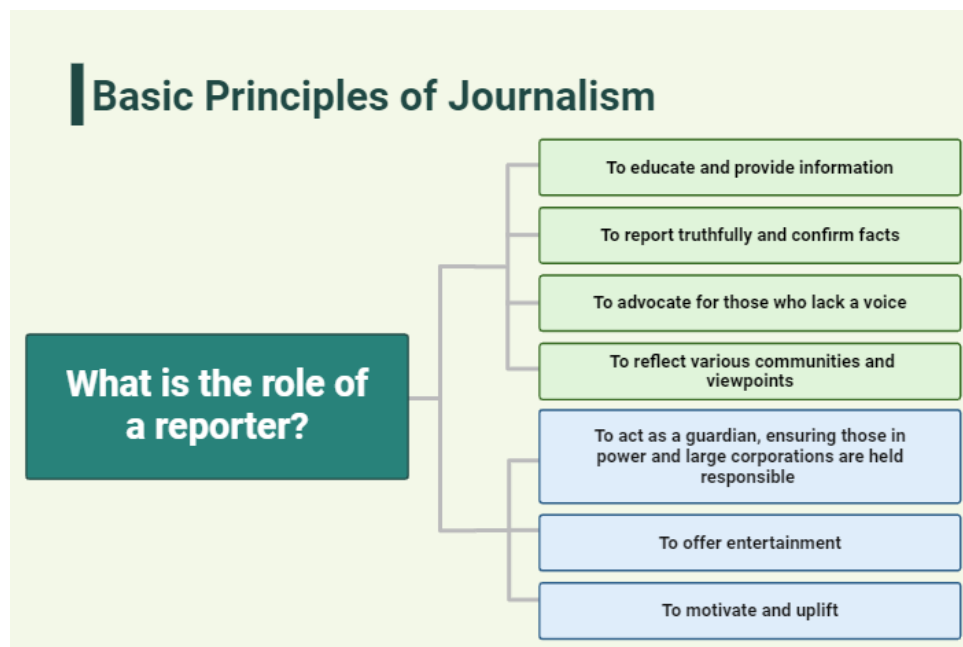- To offer entertainment
- To motivate and uplift

Figure 1: Basic Principles of Journalism

As early forms of journalism progressed from the written word to other channels of expression, the role of reporting the news has evolved as well. Only a few decades ago, one of the primary requirements for being an effective reporter was the speed at which one could accurately type words on a keyboard. While typing speed, spelling, and grammar are certainly advantageous for contemporary journalists, such abilities are not exclusive to success. If you consider the modern convenience of automated spelling- and grammar-checking, a journalist may be successful with minimal typing speed or spelling prowess.

The Speed of Information

Perhaps the biggest changes in the role of journalism in the modern digital age are centered on two factors: the speed by which information can be shared and the interactive relationship between the journalist and the audience. The speed by which news reports can be shared has increased as journalism has moved from a deliberate process of newsgathering, verification, and editing of one story at a time to an environment where the flow of information is constant and seemingly instantaneous. Reporters and news providers can pass along small portions of information without performing long-form interviews or doing extensive research. For example, journalists and news agencies often "break" big stories through a series of social media posts, parsing out bits of information along the way. Using Twitter, a story may go public.

Reporters and news providers always run the risk of being wrong in their assumptions that are based on witness accounts and, in this case, first responder radio scanner traffic. Even so, the free flow of information, even incomplete information, may develop into something of major interest to the public. Besides listening to police dispatch radio traffic, reporters also monitor and rely on social media for information from official agencies or eyewitnesses. This interactive aspect contributes to the rapid flow of information through a two-way, nonlinear flow of information.

Another shift in journalism is the personalization of information, along with the contemporary trend of "influencers." An influencer shares a lot of common skills with mainstream reporters, such as gathering information, demonstration, presentation, on-camera skills, writing skills, and using evidence to back up their reports. The main difference between the two types of "journalists" lies in their motivation and perceived objectivity. While a reporter may seek to inform based on the public's want or need to know, the influencer is paid to report information on behalf of product sponsors. Similar to influencers, some mainstream news providers have accepted money from marketing firms to run content that appears to be a news story but is really an advertisement. This practice is referred to as native advertising. In print or online formats, native ads are presented like any mainstream news story, complete with a headline, dateline, and sometimes a byline (attribution to an author). In video form, these ads may feature an anchor and a reporter, presenting product information as elements of a news report. Somewhere among the printed content or on-screen graphics is a small-print disclaimer admitting that the content is an advertisement. For the gullible or unsuspecting news consumer, such phony reports may be clever enough to grab attention or gain some traffic, but these

"infomercials" may also add to viewer mistrust or confusion.

Simone Murray (2009) examined the modern journalistic trend of audio (and sometimes video) podcast, along with a new kind of reporter known as a "podcaster." The podcast functions like a television or radio talk show, usually with a single host, a pair of hosts, or a panel of hosts. These long-form programs feature guests who appear at the host's studio or via phone or video conferencing call. The hosts may present facts backed up by evidence as any news program would do, with an added emphasis on discussion. In most podcasts, discussions may center around a single issue, investigation, sports team or league, or political action. Podcasts are also marketed as free content to all, sometimes with premium content available to paying subscribers. Additionally, mainstream journalists are often expected to use podcasts as a tool to market their content.

Major news organizations are also repurposing their video content through audio recordings of television reports. For example, the NBC newsmagazine Dateline is also available as an audio podcast.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature related to the present study provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of journalism, encompassing its changing roles and the challenges it encounters in contemporary times.

The historical context of journalism, as explored in the literature, reveals its pivotal role in shaping societies and influencing public discourse. From its inception as a tool for mobilizing public opinion during independence movements to its establishment as the Fourth Estate in democratic systems, journalism has continuously adapted to societal changes while upholding its fundamental principles.

The literature elucidates the multifaceted nature of journalism, highlighting its diverse forms and functions. Advocacy journalism, investigative journalism, photojournalism, and citizen journalism are among the various genres explored, each presenting unique approaches to storytelling and information dissemination. Additionally, the emergence of new platforms and technologies, such as social media and podcasts, has further diversified the ways in which news is produced and consumed.

In the dynamic landscape of modern journalism, the roles facing the profession have undergone significant transformations. As the digital age continues to reshape the media ecosystem, scholars and practitioners have delved into various aspects of journalism to understand its evolving nature and address the emerging challenges. Through a review of literature spanning diverse topics, this comprehensive analysis aims to provide insights into the changing roles of journalism and it confronts in contemporary times. By synthesizing insights from empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and industry analyses, this review offers a nuanced understanding of journalism's evolving landscape and its critical significance in shaping public discourse, fostering accountability, and upholding democratic values.

Suhas Chakravarty (2018) examined the pivotal role played by journalism during India's struggle for independence. Through an analysis of newspapers like "Bengal Gazette" and "Amrita Bazar Patrika," the author illustrates how journalism served as a catalyst for mobilizing public opinion and fostering national unity.

Rajesh Singh (2017) offered insights into the evolving roles and responsibilities of journalists in modern society. By analyzing shifts in news consumption patterns and audience expectations, the author highlights the need for journalists to adapt to new technologies and engage with diverse communities while upholding journalistic integrity.

Ananya Das (2021) explored the symbiotic relationship between journalism and democracy, emphasizing how a free and independent press is essential for the functioning of democratic institutions. Through case studies and comparative analysis, the author underscores the role of journalism in promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment.

Divya Patel (2018) examined the emergence of citizen journalism as a potent force in the era of digital media. Through interviews with citizen journalists and content analysis of user-generated content, the author explores the democratizing effects of citizen journalism while addressing concerns over credibility and ethical standards.

Pradeep Kumar (2019) investigated the importance of media literacy in mitigating the spread of misinformation and fake news. By analyzing educational interventions and public awareness campaigns, the author highlights the role of media literacy in empowering citizens to critically evaluate information and discern credible sources.

Vikram Sharma (2018) delves into the critical role played by investigative journalism in uncovering corruption and holding those in power accountable. Through case studies and interviews with investigative journalists, the author illustrates how in-depth reporting serves as a check on abuses of power and promotes transparency in governance.

Alfred Hermida (2019) examined the role of journalism in promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. Through case studies and content analysis of

environmental reporting, the author explores how journalists raise public consciousness about environmental issues, advocate for policy changes, and hold corporations and governments accountable for ecological stewardship.

Objectives of the Present Study

I. **To analyze the evolving nature and roles of journalism in contemporary society:** This objective aims to examine how journalism has adapted to technological advancements, shifts in audience behaviour, and changes in societal norms, thus shaping its functions and responsibilities in the present day.

II. **To explore the impact of digitalization on the practice of journalism:** This objective seeks to investigate how the ascent of digital platforms, social media, and online news outlets has transformed the dissemination of information, audience engagement, and revenue models within the journalism industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this study on the "Changing Nature and Roles of Journalism" was designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather and analyze data. The methodology outlined below aimed to address the objectives of the study by examining the evolving roles of journalism.

Modes of Data Collection

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative modes of data collection to capture the multifaceted nature of the research topic. Qualitative methods such as literature review, content analysis, and interviews were utilized to explore the changing roles of journalism.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter. This approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the changing roles of journalism while also providing empirical evidence to support theoretical insights.

Tools and Techniques:

The literature review involved systematic analysis of scholarly articles, books, reports, and other relevant sources using academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using interview guides to ensure consistency and depth in data collection. Surveys were designed using online survey platforms such as Qualtrics or SurveyMonkey to gather quantitative data from a large sample of respondents

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Research Methodology carried out for the present study was designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter. This incorporated both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather and analyze data. The results and the discussion related to the findings and observations from the present study are given as follows.

Changing Nature and Roles of Journalism:

- Role of Technology
- The majority of journalists (15 out of 20) identified the role of technology as a crucial theme in interviews (Table 1).
- Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the utilization of digital tools and platforms by journalists for news reporting, editing, and distribution.

Table 1: Frequency of Themes in Interviews with Journalists

Theme	Frequency
Role of Technology	15
Ethical Challenges	12
Impact of Social Media	8
Press Freedom	10
Diversity in Newsroom	7
Misinformation	11
Audience Engagement	9
Political Interference	6
Community Journalism	10
Media Literacy	5

This table presents the frequency of themes identified during interviews with journalists.

The themes include the role of technology, ethical challenges, impact of social media, press freedom, diversity in the newsroom, misinformation, audience engagement, political interference, community journalism, and media literacy. The frequencies represent how often each theme was mentioned during the interviews.

Ethical Challenges
Ethical concerns such as conflict of interest, privacy invasion, and sensationalism were frequently mentioned by journalists, with conflict of interest being the most prevalent (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Ethical Concerns in Journalists' Narratives

Ethical Concerns	Frequency
Conflict of Interest	30
Privacy Invasion	25
Sensationalism	20
Plagiarism	18
Transparency	15
Payment for Coverage	22
Undisclosed Bias	17
Manipulative Editing	14
Deceptive Practices	12
Corporate Influence	16

This table showcases the distribution of ethical concerns identified in journalists' narratives. The ethical concerns include conflict of interest, privacy invasion, sensationalism, plagiarism, and transparency, payment for coverage, undisclosed bias, manipulative editing, deceptive practices, and corporate influence. The frequencies indicate how many times each ethical concern was mentioned in the narratives.

Despite these challenges, the majority of journalists (65%) rated their own journalistic integrity as either excellent or good (Table 3).

Table 3: Rating of Journalistic Integrity by Respondents

Journalistic Integrity Rating	Frequency
Excellent (5)	25
Good (4)	30
Average (3)	15
Below Average (2)	8
Poor (1)	2
Not Sure/No Response	10

This table displays the rating of journalistic integrity provided by respondents. The ratings range from Excellent (5) to Poor (1), with an additional category for Not Sure/No Response. The frequencies indicate how many respondents assigned each rating to journalistic integrity.

Impact of Social Media
Social media's impact on journalism practices has been substantial, with a notable increase in the speed of reporting and engagement with diverse audiences (Table 4). However, concerns regarding the amplification of misinformation and erosion of editorial standards persist.

Table 4: Perceived Impact of Social Media on Journalism Practices

Impact on Journalism Practices	Frequency
Increased Speed of Reporting	35
Erosion of Editorial Standards	28
Expansion of Audience Reach	20
Amplification of Misinformation	10
Facilitation of Citizen Journalism	25
Engagement with Diverse Audiences	18
Challenges in Fact-Checking	22
Dependency on Clickbait	15
Influence of Viral Content	12
Promotion of Sensationalism	16

This table presents the perceived impact of social media on journalism practices as identified by respondents.

The impacts include increased speed of reporting, erosion of editorial standards, expansion of audience reach, amplification of misinformation, facilitation of citizen journalism, engagement with diverse audiences, challenges in fact-checking, dependency on clickbait, influence of viral content, and promotion of sensationalism. The frequencies indicate how many respondents perceived each impact.

Media Literacy

Focus group discussions highlighted the importance of media literacy, with critical thinking and source evaluation being the most emphasized themes (Table 5). Efforts to promote media literacy are deemed essential in combating misinformation and enhancing public understanding of journalistic practices.

Table 5: Frequency of Themes in Focus Group Discussions on Media Literacy

Theme	Frequency
Critical Thinking	25
Source Evaluation	20
Fact-Checking	18
Bias Awareness	15
Digital Literacy	22
News Literacy	17
Misinformation Awareness	14
Media Ownership Awareness	12
Role of Education	16
Role of Social Media	10

This table displays the frequency of themes identified in focus group discussions on media literacy. The themes include critical thinking, source evaluation, fact-checking, bias awareness, digital literacy, news literacy, misinformation awareness, media ownership awareness, role of education, and role of social media. The frequencies indicate how often each theme was discussed during the focus group discussions.

- Journalistic Integrity
- Respondents' ratings of journalistic integrity remained relatively high, with 55% rating it as excellent or good (Table 6). However, a significant proportion expressed neutrality or dissatisfaction, indicating room for improvement in upholding journalistic standards.

Table 6: Rating of Journalistic Integrity by Respondents

Journalistic Integrity Rating	Frequency
Excellent (5)	25
Good (4)	30
Average (3)	15
Below Average (2)	8
Poor (1)	2
Not Sure/No Response	10

This table displays the rating of journalistic integrity provided by respondents. The ratings range from Excellent (5) to Poor (1), with an additional category for Not Sure/No Response. The frequencies indicate how many respondents assigned each rating to journalistic integrity.

Significance of the Study
This study holds significance for various stakeholders:

I. **Journalists and Media Practitioners:** By providing insights into the changing dynamics of journalism, this study offers valuable knowledge and guidance for journalists navigating the complexities of modern media environments.

II. **Academic Community:** Scholars and researchers in the fields of media studies, communication, and sociology will benefit from the empirical insights and theoretical frameworks presented in this study, contributing to the academic discourse on journalism.

III. **General Public:** By raising awareness about the role and responsibilities of journalism in society, this study empowers citizens to critically engage with media content, discern credible sources, and actively participate in democratic processes.

CONCLUSION

Through an extensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, this study has offered valuable insights into the complex dynamics shaping the field of journalism and its profound implications for society, the analysis of data from interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions revealed significant shifts in the roles of journalism, driven primarily by advancements in technology and changes in audience behavior. Traditional notions of journalism as the sole purveyor of news have given way to a more complex ecosystem where social media, influencers, and user-generated content play increasingly prominent roles.

Additionally, the rise of digital platforms has accelerated the pace of news dissemination, challenging traditional journalistic practices and blurring the lines between fact and opinion. Furthermore, the comprehensive analysis presented in this study underscores the intricate interplay between changing roles within the realm of journalism. As the digital revolution reshapes the media landscape, journalists and media organizations must adapt to new modes of storytelling, audience engagement, and revenue generation. The findings highlight the need for continuous innovation and adaptation to meet the evolving needs and expectations of audiences in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct within the journalism profession. Upholding rigorous journalistic standards and integrity is essential to rebuilding trust with audiences and safeguarding the credibility of the media industry. By prioritizing accuracy, fairness, and impartiality in their reporting, journalists can reaffirm their role as trusted sources of information and guardians of democracy.

Conflict of Interest: the author declare no conflict of Interest

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