

Analyzing the Journalism Students' Usage and Perception of using AI: A TAM-based study

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) in recent years has significantly influenced various domains, including journalism education. This study explores the adoption of AI tools among journalism students, focusing on the platforms, their primary purposes, perceived benefits, and associated challenges. The research used qualitative research methodology, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 journalism students from Ernakulam district to get deep insights about the research questions. The findings of the study reveal that students primarily use AI for Information Retrieval, Content Creation, and Multimedia Production. ChatGPT, Meta AI, Google Gemini, and Perplexity are the most popular platforms among the respondent students, followed by Leonardo AI, Dall-E, Davinci AI, and Canva AI. Students perceive that AI also enhanced their efficiency, improved their content quality, and streamlined the workflow. However, concerns such as reducing creativity, over-reliance on AI, data privacy risks, and misinformation were identified as key challenges by the students. The study aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), highlighting the balance between perceived usefulness and ease of use in AI adoption. The research underscores the need for proper AI training in journalism education to foster ethical and responsible usage.

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Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Journalism Students, Kerala, TAM, Opportunities, Challenges

Introduction

The extensive expansion and development of artificial intelligence in recent years have significantly altered human life, especially learning, working, and communicating (Fošner, 2024). AI is changing the traditional classroom teaching and learning method, by incorporating various innovative techniques. Also, it has modified the conventional workplace with more automation and increased efficiency. It also revolutionised communication by enabling various automated features like virtual assistants, chatbots, content creation, translations, image recognition, augmented reality and much more. One of the key domains which is affected by the intervention of AI is education. The use of AI is emerging as a transformative force in education, notably higher education. AI is offering innovative methods and tools to achieve greater student engagement and improve learning outcomes (Okulich-Kazarin et al., 2024).

The expansion of AI has opened up new avenues in higher education, which require institutions to adapt to change and ensure its proper and ethical use. Students can use AI for various academic activities to enhance the quality of academic work. AI is not only for students but also for academicians. Through the creative use of AI, academicians can create compelling presentations and lecture notes. It can also be used to evaluate student performance. Journalism education is one such discipline which is transforming drastically due to the emergence of AI. As AI is reshaping news production, content delivery and audience engagement, journalism students must cope with the new technologies (Wenger et al., 2024). The applications of AI can be seen in various related domains like advertising, content creation, digital marketing, analytics, and social media. Besides, many media organizations are using AI's potential for automated journalism, which has revolutionized the field of journalism. It enables journalists to access and analyze tons of data and conclude the information with less time (Jodie, 2024). As journalism is a highly technology-dependent profession, students and educators must develop skills to incorporate AI into their workspace to enhance the quality of work with ease. However, there is also a concern about the misuse of AI and its influence on students' academic integrity

(Fernández Barrero et al., 2024). The study seeks to explore some intriguing questions relating to the pertinent topic. By formulating the following objectives and research questions, the study tries to find out journalism students' use of various AI platforms, as well as their primary purposes, benefits, and limitations.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the various AI platforms utilized by journalism students.
2. To identify the primary purposes for which journalism students use AI.
3. To analyse the benefits of AI integration in journalistic work.
4. To examine the challenges and limitations faced by journalism students in using AI.

Research Questions

1. What are the different AI platforms used by journalism students?
2. What are the primary purposes for which journalism students use AI?
3. How does AI benefit journalism students in their work?
4. What challenges and limitations do journalism students face when using AI?

Review of literature

AI in Journalism Education

The research on the use of AI among journalism students is in the nascent stages. However, there are a few studies that deal with this topic.

Assad (2024) analyses of the use of ChatGPT among media students in Egypt. The study uses a mixed methodology to offer insights into the opportunities and challenges of using ChatGPT among media students. The research identified a growing significance of ChatGPT among media students. The students acknowledged ChatGPT as a valuable tool for doing various tasks. Also, the media students identify some limitations, which include authenticity and lack of originality (Assad, 2024).

Seo (2025) examines the attitudes, intentions, and perceptions of using AI among the media students of Brazil and the USA. The research uses a mixed methodology with qualitative interviews and questionnaires for data collection. The study identified that students are optimistic about the potential benefits of AI. The research also finds that students with higher levels of AI familiarity and perceived efficiency show higher levels of AI self-efficacy (Seo, 2025).

Fernández Barrero et al. (2024) studied the possibilities and challenges of AI in the teaching-learning process of journalism writing in Spanish universities. The study uses a mixed methodology with journalism students and journalism professors as samples. The study identified the purpose of using AI by journalism students and the advantages and challenges of using AI. The research also identifies that there should be formal education for journalism teachers and students for the proper and ethical use of AI (Fernández Barrero et al., 2024).

Wenger et al. (2024) discuss the impact of AI on journalism education in the United States. The study uses qualitative interviews with journalism faculties to find answers to the research questions. The research identified the need for faculty expertise, partnerships, and curriculum development to incorporate AI into journalism education. The research also suggests proper AI policies and ethical considerations for using AI in journalism education (Wenger et al., 2024).

Husnain & Tareen (2024) explore the scope of AI in journalism education. The study uses a quantitative methodology with the survey as a data collection method. The research identifies seven key aspects of AI in journalism data management, trend observance and identification, interactive enrichment, fact-checking, and targeted advertisement (Husnain & Tareen, 2024).

The above literature addresses key issues related to journalism education and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI). Although there is a growing need to investigate how journalism students are adopting and utilizing AI, there remains a lack of comprehensive research on this topic. Furthermore, only a few studies explore journalism students' use of AI within the Indian context, particularly in Kerala.

Theoretical Framework

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The technology acceptance model (TAM) is a widely acknowledged framework for understanding and explaining why people accept and use new technologies. It measures user acceptance of the latest technologies and demonstrates their willingness to use a new technology. The model was developed by Fred D Davis in 1989. The model consists of two key predictors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness is the belief that the use of new technology enhances performance, and perceived ease of use is the belief that the use of the latest technology is free of effort (Davis, 1989). The theory allows for the adaptation of various new technologies across different demographics. In this study, we try to incorporate TAM with AI, and it focuses particularly on journalism students. The research offers valuable insights into the use of artificial intelligence-based technologies among journalism students.

Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative research methodology to understand the use of AI technologies among journalism students. The researchers employ purposive sampling techniques to avail deep insights into the AI use of journalism students. The researchers use in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. Data was collected from twenty graduate or postgraduate journalism students studying in various colleges in Ernakulam district. Before conducting the interviews, participants are given instructions regarding the objective and nature of the research. Ethical research norms such as obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality are guaranteed to the students before gathering the data. Participants are contacted either directly or via digital means such as Google Meet. The interviews are audio recorded with the permission of the samples to ensure proper data collection. The table below details the samples interviewed.

Table 1: *The Samples Interviewed*

Code	Gender	Age	Class
Respondent 1	Male	19	BA Mass Communication
Respondent 2	Female	20	BA Mass Communication
Respondent 3	Female	24	MA Mass communication
Respondent 4	Male	23	MA Mass communication
Respondent 5	Female	19	BA Mass Communication
Respondent 6	Female	22	MA Mass communication
Respondent 7	Male	20	BA Mass Communication
Respondent 8	Female	22	MA Mass communication
Respondent 9	Male	23	MA Mass communication
Respondent 10	Female	19	BA Mass Communication
Respondent 11	Male	23	MA Mass communication
Respondent 12	Male	24	MA Mass communication
Respondent 13	Female	20	BA Mass Communication
Respondent 14	Male	20	BA Mass Communication
Respondent 15	Female	24	Pg diploma journalism
Respondent 16	Male	24	Pg diploma journalism
Respondent 17	Female	23	MA Mass communication
Respondent 18	Male	22	MA Mass communication
Respondent 19	Female	23	MA Mass communication
Respondent 20	Male	22	MA Mass communication

The researchers use a grounded theory approach to analyse interview data. An open coding procedure is employed initially to develop different categories and themes from the data based on research objectives. In the following phase, the researchers use axial coding to categorise open codes into several meaningful themes. At the final stage, the categories were refined and consolidated using a selective coding procedure, which produced themes and ideas that successfully explained the data.

Data Analysis

The sample consists of twenty journalism and mass communication students, evenly divided into ten males and ten females. Among them, seven are graduate students, two are enrolled in a diploma program, and eleven are postgraduate students.

Artificial Intelligence platforms used

All the participants of the study are familiar with artificial intelligence technology and its use. All the participants used ChatGPT, which is the most used and preferred AI technology among the samples. It may be attributed to the advanced conversational capabilities and its ability to generate comprehensive responses to queries. Another factor might be the novelty of ChatGPT. It was the first of its kind when it allowed access to the public. Most of the samples use Meta AI and Google Gemini AI. The student samples are exploring other conversational chatbots also for information and content creation. This may be due to their increased interest in AI. A few students use Dall-E, Perplexity AI, Leonardo AI, Ebsynth, Davinci AI and Canva AI. These tools enable journalism students to use creative and compelling visual storytelling techniques and graphic designs.

So, generally, journalism students use ChatGPT, Meta AI, Google Gemini, and Perplexity as conversational AI tools to get information related to various queries. Dall-E, Leonardo AI, Ebsynth, Davinci AI, and Canva AI are primarily used to generate and edit text, image and video content, which might be crucial to journalism students.

Purpose of using AI

Information Retrieval

Journalism students use AI platforms mainly for three purposes: information retrieval, content creation, and multimedia production. One of the primary uses is for information retrieval. AI tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Perplexity, and Meta AI serve as assistants, helping students explore academic and non-academic topics of interest with ease. The ability of these AI tools to provide detailed yet simplified explanations makes them particularly valuable for students struggling with complex concepts.

For example, Respondent 5 said, "I use AI for various purposes. My primary use of AI is to get more information about the topics discussed in the classroom. I will explore the issues I want to know using the ChatGPT. AI provides me with detailed and simple explanations for my queries."

Respondent 15 said, "AI, especially ChatGPT, and Gemini, help me get in-depth information about the subjects taught in the class. I will ask various perspectives on the topic. Moreover, AI will explain it. Sometimes, I will ask AI if I do not understand the concepts in the class."

Content Creation

Another significant use of AI among journalism students is in content creation. Students use AI to write various academic and professional content. Students use AI tools to write assignments, prepare presentations, and even write news articles.

For example, Respondent 1 said, "I use AI for various writing purposes. It includes writing assignments, preparing presentations, preparing notes for study, writing dissertations, etc. It helps to quickly and flawlessly convey my ideas in words. I will also use it to check grammar and enhance my language."

Respondent 10 said, "I am working as a freelance content writer on an online news channel. I use AI tools to enhance my news writing skills and keep up with deadlines."

Multimedia Production

Some participants use AI for visual and multimedia content production, which includes video editing, graphic design, and even digital art.

For example, Respondent 16 said, "I create artistic and abstract images using AI to publish them in my social media feed. I am an artist, and it helps to enhance my digital painting. I use Leonardo AI and Davinci AI in my works."

Respondent 19 said, "I use AI to create notices and posters. I use it for college activities and other small events. Canva Pro's AI capabilities make my work more attractive and super cool."

Respondent 20 said, "My hobby is video editing. I use AI tools in editing videos. The AI features of Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut Pro help to enhance my work and meet deadlines."

Advantages of using AI

Making Works Easier

Students underline AI's ability to simplify complex tasks, reducing effort and making academic work more manageable.

Respondent 5 said, "AI tools make my work simple and easy. Complex writing tasks can be done using AI tools. It saves me lots of time and effort." Respondent 10 said, "I choose AI because it saves much time. With AI, I don't have to put too much effort and time into doing just one thing. I can get it done easily using AI."

Enhancing the Quality of Work

Students perceive AI as a tool that enhances the quality of content by generating new ideas, providing insights, and improving accuracy.

Respondent 13 said, "AI is a powerful tool that can be used in many different ways. In my work, I use AI to help me with a variety of tasks, including generating new ideas, analyzing data to make my work better, etc."

Respondent 17 said, “I rely on AI tools to get more information about something, and if I have brain rot, it helps me to boost up and create a new idea. From the ideas given by AI, I explore more possibilities of my work.”

Time Efficiency

Students perceive that AI automation accelerates repetitive tasks, allowing students to focus on creative and strategic aspects of their work.

Respondent 20 said, “AI has significantly changed the way I approach work by automating repetitive tasks, providing access to vast amounts of information quickly, enabling data-driven insights, and freeing up time to focus on more complex, creative, and strategic aspects of my job.”

Respondent 10 said, “AI saves me a lot of time summarising and error check can be done very easily and timely with AI. Also, with proper prompts complex analysis works can be done very easily.”

The findings from the respondents align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which explains technology adoption based on Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU). Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which users believe that AI enhances their productivity and performance. Respondent students above expressed that AI significantly improves their efficiency and quality of work. TAM also suggests that technology adoption is also influenced by how easy users find it to operate. The respondents frequently mentioned that AI simplifies tasks, making their work more manageable. The statements of the respondents indicate that minimal effort is required to integrate AI into their workflow, which increases its acceptance.

Disadvantages of Using AI

Lack of Creative Thinking and Cognitive Skills

Some students pointed out that AI reliance has reduced their cognitive engagement, limiting creativity and independent thought.

Respondent 18 said, "I don't think AI has enhanced or changed the way I approach work because earlier, before AI came, I used my creative thinking to write or do work, but after AI came, it has affected my writing and thinking skills. I don't write anymore it's hard for me to process and think creatively I feel blank and stuck." Students also raise their concern that AI may hinder their creative thinking capacity and cognitive skills. Because of over-dependence and ease of getting work done, the students are not using their brains and cognitive skills to generate ideas.

Lack of Individual Growth

AI's ease of use raises concerns among students about over-reliance, potentially impacting personal development and confidence. Respondent 10 said, "AI tools made my work much easier. However, being a constant user, lack of confidence is becoming a serious concern. The work output would be satisfactory, but that does not contribute to an individual growth." Students also feel that even though they are getting their work done it may not help in their individual growth.

Data Privacy and Bias

Students express concerns about data privacy and the potential biases embedded in AI algorithms. Respondent 12 said, "In many industries, AI has significant implications beyond just automating tasks, including enhancing decision-making through data analysis and improving customer experiences through personalization. However, it also raises concerns about ethical considerations regarding data privacy and bias in algorithms."

Respondent 20 said "I have seen some AI videos of some actors and political leaders through social media. These people are not alive anymore. With the help of AI, they are recreated in videos. Likewise, individual privacy is at risk while using AI."

Fake and Manipulated Content

Misinformation and manipulated AI-generated content are growing concerns among students.

Respondent 9 said “We cannot depend on AI because sometimes AI will mislead you. The content AI provides is not one hundred percent accurate; at times, it is fake or misleading. In some cases, AI also gave us manipulated content.”

Respondent 12 said “I have seen many AI-generated videos which are fake and misleading. The number of likes and shares these videos are getting is alarming. People might be making these videos for monetary benefits but there should also be ethical considerations.”

Respondents also express their concerns about the fake and manipulated content produced with the help of AI. They agree that they have come across various fake and manipulated content created by AI on social media. They are concerned about the popularity it is getting on social media.

Conclusion

The findings of the research indicate that AI has become an integral tool for journalism students, offering various advantages such as increased efficiency, enhanced work quality, and improved creative output. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework supports these insights, demonstrating that AI adoption is driven by perceived usefulness (e.g., time-saving, idea generation, and automation) and perceived ease of use (e.g., accessibility and task simplification). However, the study also highlights critical concerns, including lack of creativity, over-reliance on AI affecting individual growth, data privacy issues, and the risk of misinformation. While AI offers significant benefits, journalism students must balance its use with critical thinking and ethical considerations to ensure responsible and skilful application in their work. The findings of the research also identified a need for systematic ethical training on AI-based technologies among the students.

Limitations and Scope of Future Research

Apart from some interesting findings, the study also has some limitations. The research sample is based on a single district in Kerala, Ernakulam, which is mainly urban-centric. So, the findings cannot be generalised to other geographical contexts. Future studies can be done using quantitative methodology with

samples from all-round Kerala to get generalizable results. Also, research can be conducted among journalism academicians to get more insights into the use of AI among journalism students.

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