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THE TRANSFORMATION OF UINSU STUDENTS' JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES IN THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ERA TOWARD GOLDEN INDONESIA 2045

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has fundamentally reshaped journalistic practices globally, yet its implications within Islamic higher education contexts remain insufficiently explored in academic literature. This study investigates the transformation of journalistic practices among students of the Communication Studies Program at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara (UINSU) in the AI era, with particular attention to the interplay between AI literacy, Islamic journalistic ethics, and human resource readiness toward the Indonesia Emas 2045 vision. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with fifteen purposively selected informants, complemented by observation and documentation. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, with source triangulation applied to ensure validity. Findings demonstrate that AI has permeated all stages of student journalistic practice, from ideation and information gathering to manuscript editing and digital content distribution. While AI adoption enhances efficiency, productivity, and creative exploration, it simultaneously poses critical challenges, including technological dependency, insufficient fact-checking, algorithmic bias, digital plagiarism, and the erosion of critical thinking and journalistic ethics. AI literacy emerged as the most significant determinant of responsible technology use, while Islamic values of truthfulness (shidq), justice ('adl), and trustworthiness (amanah) serve as essential moral anchors in navigating AI integration. This study contributes theoretically by extending technological determinism theory within an Islamic journalistic education context and practically by proposing an AI-integrated journalistic curriculum model for Islamic universities aligned with the Indonesia Emas 2045 national development agenda.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, has transformed the journalistic ecosystem through automation and algorithmic assistance in information retrieval, data analysis, text and visual production, editing, personalization, and news distribution. In practice, AI can accelerate content production and assist journalists in processing large volumes of information. However, its use also raises concerns regarding accuracy, algorithmic transparency, data bias, privacy protection, copyright, and editorial accountability. These issues indicate that AI-driven journalistic transformation cannot be understood merely as the replacement of conventional tools with more

efficient technologies. Rather, it also reshapes the division of roles between humans and machines in determining which information is selected, processed, verified, and disseminated to the public. Therefore, the integration of AI into journalism should be situated within a framework of human–technology collaboration that maintains editorial oversight, contextual judgment, and human responsibility for every piece of information published (Jaakkola, 2023; Sonni et al., 2024).

This transformation is increasingly relevant in higher education because students of communication and journalism are prospective information producers as well as gatekeepers within the digital media ecosystem. The growing accessibility of AI platforms enables students to use these technologies to identify topics, formulate news angles, develop story outlines, improve language, create illustrations, and adapt content to the characteristics of digital media. However, the ability to operate AI applications should not be equated with AI literacy. AI literacy encompasses an understanding of how AI systems operate and their limitations, the ability to critically evaluate their outputs, awareness of bias and ethical implications, and the capacity to determine accountable forms of technology use. Without these competencies, students may accept AI-generated outputs as accurate information, neglect the examination of primary sources, or delegate editorial decisions to algorithmic recommendations. Journalism education must therefore develop technical proficiency alongside verification skills, transparency in AI use, critical reasoning, and human oversight of journalistic decision-making (Jaakkola, 2023; Shiri, 2024).

Research on AI and journalism in Indonesia has continued to expand, although most studies remain focused on the implementation of robotic journalism in the media industry, the consequences of automation for journalistic employment, or improvements in students' understanding through AI training. Nurfiana (2024), for example, examined the capacity of robot journalism to accelerate news production while also identifying its limitations in understanding causality, context, and journalistic ethics. Meanwhile, Abdullah et al. (2024) demonstrated that AI training can improve students' understanding of the opportunities and challenges posed by technology within the journalistic profession. Although these studies provide an important foundation, they have not examined in sufficient depth how students use AI in naturally occurring journalistic practices, ranging from topic selection, source discovery and selection, writing, editing, and verification to content distribution. Furthermore, relatively few studies have explained how differences in AI literacy and ethical understanding shape the ways in which students accept, verify, modify, or reject recommendations generated by AI systems.

These concerns acquire a more specific dimension within the context of Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara (UINSU). As an Islamic higher education institution, journalism education at UINSU is directed not only toward the mastery of information production skills but also toward the internalization of honesty, responsibility, intellectual competence, justice, and public benefit. These values may be represented through the principles of prophetic journalism, including shidq, amanah, tabligh, and fathanah. Previous studies have positioned prophetic journalism as a normative framework for addressing disinformation, digital extremism, declining public trust in the media, and the weakening of journalists' social responsibility (Siregar & Saragih, 2026; Zahara & Saragih, 2026). Nevertheless, the conceptual presence of Islamic values does not automatically explain how they are implemented in the use of AI. Empirical evidence is still required to understand how students operationalize these values when constructing prompts, evaluating the accuracy of AI-generated outputs, providing attribution, maintaining originality, verifying sources, and determining whether particular content is suitable for publication.

Against this background, the research gap lies in the absence of studies that integrate the transformation of students' journalistic workflows, AI literacy, digital gatekeeping processes, and Islamic journalistic ethics within a clearly defined and bounded empirical context. The novelty of this study does not rest on claiming the discovery of universally applicable forms of algorithmic bias. Instead, it lies in providing a contextual analysis of how Communication Studies students at UINSU negotiate the respective roles of humans and AI at each stage of information production. The digital gatekeeping perspective is employed to analyze changes in the selection, verification, editing, and distribution of information when some of these functions are supported by algorithms. Meanwhile, AI literacy and journalistic ethics are understood as interpretive capacities that influence how students interact with technology rather than as statistical variables that determine behavior in a linear manner. This position enables the study to explain variations in students' practices more proportionately while avoiding generalizations that extend beyond the characteristics of the case under investigation (Jaakkola, 2023; Shiri, 2024; Sonni et al., 2024).

The relationship between this study and the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045 is situated within the empirical issue of human resource readiness to engage with digital technologies critically, creatively, and responsibly. Indonesia's national digital transformation requires not only users who are capable of operating AI but also individuals who can evaluate information, understand technological risks, uphold professional integrity, and produce high-quality information for the public. The Indonesian government has similarly identified the strengthening of digital literacy, mastery of advanced technologies, and improvement of workforce quality as integral components of the national development agenda toward Golden Indonesia 2045 (Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, 2025). This study does not seek to generalize the experiences of UINSU students as representative of all university students in Indonesia. Rather, it aims to provide contextual evidence that can support the development of AI- and ethics-based journalism curricula. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the forms of transformation occurring in the journalistic practices of UINSU students, identify the associated opportunities and risks, examine the role of AI literacy and Islamic journalistic ethics in the use of technology, and explain their relevance to strengthening the competencies of prospective journalists in preparation for Golden Indonesia 2045.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method to gain an in-depth understanding of the transformation of students' journalistic practices in the era of artificial intelligence. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on participants' interpretations, experiences, and perspectives regarding social phenomena that occur naturally within the context of digital technology use. According to Moleong (2018), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena holistically by describing them in words within their natural settings.

The study was conducted at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara (UINSU), Medan. The research site was selected because UINSU students are directly involved in journalistic practices, both through academic activities in the Communication Studies Program and through student press organizations on campus. Informants were selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria required participants to be active students of the UINSU Communication Studies Program in their fourth to eighth semesters, to have been actively involved in campus journalism activities for at least one semester, and to have used at least one generative AI platform in producing journalistic work. Sugiyono (2019) explains that purposive sampling is used to select informants who are considered to possess the most relevant knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Academic professionalism in this study refers to the application of ethical standards, integrity, and scholarly responsibility by students at every stage of journalistic practice, including data collection, writing, and the use of technologies such as generative AI. Students are expected to uphold objectivity, honesty, and accountability in producing journalistic work so that the information generated is credible and beneficial to both the campus community and the wider public. Informant diversity was maintained by considering variations in semester level, gender, degree of involvement in the campus press, and intensity of AI use. This strategy was intended to capture a broader and more comprehensive range of experiences. A total of ten informants participated in the study. This number was considered adequate because the data had reached saturation, indicating that the inclusion of additional informants no longer generated significant new themes. In-depth interviews were conducted individually, lasting approximately ten to thirty minutes for each informant. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim before the data analysis stage.

Informant	Semester	Gender	Involvement in Campus Press	Intensity of AI Use
Informant 1	6	Male	Active member	High
Informant 2	8	Female	Editor	High
Informant 3	4	Male	Active member	Moderate
Informant 4	6	Male	Active member	High
Informant 5	6	Female	Campus digital media contributor	Moderate
Informant 6	8	Male	Active member	Low
Informant 7	4	Female	Active member	Moderate

Informant	Semester	Gender	Involvement in Campus Press	Intensity of AI Use
Informant 8	4	Female	Active member	High
Informant 9	6	Male	Active member	Moderate
Informant 10	6	Female	Active member	Moderate

Data were collected through three techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were employed to explore students' experiences of using AI in journalistic practices, including their perceptions of its convenience, challenges, and ethical implications. Observation was conducted to directly examine students' journalistic activities within the academic environment, while documentation was used to collect data in the form of students' journalistic works and digital media activities relevant to the study. According to Sugiyono (2019), data collection constitutes a strategic stage in research because the primary objective of research is to obtain valid data.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives. The data were subsequently presented in the form of systematic descriptive narratives, while conclusions were drawn through an in-depth interpretation of the analyzed data. Data credibility was established through source triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants to ensure the consistency of the findings collected in the field (Moleong, 2018).

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Transformation of UINSU Students' Journalistic Practices in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

The principal findings demonstrate that the use of artificial intelligence has substantially transformed every stage of journalistic practice among UINSU students, ranging from idea generation and information gathering to news writing, editing, and digital content distribution. This transformation was not uniform but varied according to each student's level of familiarity with AI, AI literacy, and ethical awareness. The most prominent changes occurred during the stages of idea generation and news writing, in which AI increasingly became a primary supporting tool accessed by students before beginning the news production process.

During the stages of idea generation and news-issue identification, students used generative AI platforms to explore emerging topics, identify relevant news angles, and develop preliminary reporting frameworks. One informant, who was an active member of the UINSU campus press, described his experience as follows:

> *"Before using AI, I often spent a long time deciding on the angle of a news story. Now, I only need to enter the topic into ChatGPT, and it immediately generates several perspectives that I can consider. However, I still use the results only as an initial reference rather than applying them directly." (Informant 1, sixth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The statement reflects a critical and reflective pattern of AI use in which technology is positioned as a stimulus for generating ideas rather than as the determining factor in directing the reporting process. This finding is consistent with Dewi and Hastjarjo (2024), who argue that AI is most productive in journalism when it functions as a supporting tool that expands journalists' cognitive capacities rather than replacing them. Nevertheless, not all students demonstrated the same degree of reflective engagement. Another informant admitted that, during the initial period of using AI, he had directly adopted AI-generated content without conducting adequate verification:

> *"To be honest, I once copied and pasted AI-generated content directly into the opening section of my news article. At the time, I thought the result was already good. However, after my lecturer edited it, I realized that some of the information was inaccurate and that the sources were unclear." (Informant 3, fourth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The experience of Informant 3 illustrates a tangible risk that emerges when students possess inadequate AI literacy, namely the tendency to accept AI-generated outputs without critical evaluation. Pratama and Fadilah (2024) emphasize that hallucination in generative AI systems, in which a system produces information that appears convincing but is factually inaccurate, constitutes a serious threat to the accuracy of journalistic work when it is not accompanied by strong verification skills.

Significant changes were also observed during the information-gathering stage. Students no longer relied exclusively on field observations and direct interviews as their primary sources of information. Instead, they integrated AI-assisted searches as a preliminary step for identifying potential sources and understanding the background of the issues being investigated. An informant who served as an editor for the UINSU campus press explained:

> *"AI helps me find statistics, background information on an issue, or the names of potentially relevant sources. However, I always cross-check everything obtained from AI against primary sources. Without verification, a news report could become disastrous." (Informant 2, eighth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The statement made by Informant 2 demonstrates a relatively advanced level of AI literacy and journalistic awareness, characterized by a clear distinction between the use of AI as a preliminary research tool and the professional obligation to verify information through primary sources. This practice reflects the internalization of journalistic ethical principles that regard information verification as a responsibility that cannot be delegated to technology, as emphasized by the Indonesian Press Council (2025).

AI was used more intensively during the writing and editing stages than during the other stages of journalistic production. Students employed AI to structure paragraphs, improve grammar, develop compelling opening sentences, and edit drafts to enhance their clarity and accessibility for readers. One informant who actively contributed to a campus digital media platform stated:

> *"AI is extremely helpful during the editing stage. I first write the initial draft independently and then ask AI to improve the flow of the sentences and ensure that there are no grammatical errors. The result is much more organized, and the process is more efficient than editing the entire text from the beginning." (Informant 5, sixth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The use of AI during the editing process, as demonstrated by Informant 5, represents a relatively safe and productive practice because the student retained the originality of the content by independently preparing the initial draft before involving AI in the refinement process. Sari and Kusuma (2024) observe that the use of AI in editing following the independent preparation of an initial draft tends to produce higher-quality journalistic work. This approach ensures that the journalist's original ideas and perspectives remain the primary foundation of the resulting content.

Opportunities for Using Artificial Intelligence in Students' Journalistic Practices

The use of AI in the journalistic practices of UINSU students presents several significant opportunities that were directly experienced by the informants. The most prominent opportunity identified by all informants was increased time efficiency in the news production process. Students acknowledged that AI enabled them to complete an entire news production cycle considerably faster than conventional methods without substantially compromising the quality of their work. One informant emphasized:

> *"Writing news stories is now much faster because of AI. I can use the remaining time to conduct interviews and ensure that the data are more complete." (Informant 4, sixth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The second opportunity identified by the informants was AI's capacity to support creativity and facilitate the development of more diverse news ideas. Several students stated that AI helped them move beyond their usual preferences in selecting topics and news angles, thereby encouraging them to explore issues they had not previously considered. Informant 6 stated:

> *"When I run out of ideas, I simply enter several keywords into an AI platform. It usually generates many ideas that can be developed into news stories." (Informant 6, fourth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The third opportunity concerns broader access to information and references. Students with limited access to high-quality journalistic resources perceived AI as a bridge connecting them to a range of information and perspectives that had previously been difficult to obtain. This finding is consistent with the potential of AI as a technology that democratizes access to information and may consequently reduce disparities in the quality of journalistic practices between students in major urban centers and those in regional areas (Nugroho & Hidayat, 2024).

Challenges of Using Artificial Intelligence in Students' Journalistic Practices

Despite the various opportunities it offers, the use of AI in the journalistic practices of UINSU students also presents significant challenges. The first and most frequently reported challenge concerns the accuracy and verification of AI-generated information. Almost all informants had encountered situations in which AI produced data or factual claims that were inaccurate, outdated, or derived from sources that could not be traced. One informant described the experience as follows:

> *"I once used data generated by AI without verifying the source. When my lecturer asked for the reference, I could not provide an answer. Since then, I have always checked every piece of AI-generated data against official sources." (Informant 7, sixth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The second challenge that consistently emerged from the findings was technological dependence, which may gradually erode students' fundamental journalistic skills. Several informants admitted that the intensive use of AI made it more difficult for them to work without technological assistance, particularly when producing original writing and critically analyzing an issue:

> *"I am concerned about myself. The more frequently I use AI, the more difficult it becomes to write without its assistance. It feels as though I have developed a dependence that I was previously unaware of. Without AI, I feel that my writing is not as good as it used to be." (Informant 8, sixth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2025).*

The concern expressed by Informant 8 reflects a serious risk identified by Sari and Kusuma (2024), who argue that the excessive and uncontrolled use of AI in students' journalistic practices may create technological dependence. Such dependence may weaken the intellectual capacity and independent creativity that constitute essential competencies for journalists.

The third challenge relates to journalistic ethics, particularly the risk of digital plagiarism and the erosion of originality. Several informants acknowledged the temptation to use AI-generated content directly without providing clear attribution. From an ethical perspective, such a practice violates the principles of academic and journalistic integrity:

> *"Some of my friends use AI-generated texts directly without making any changes. In my view, this is dishonest because journalistic work should still originate from our own thinking." (Informant 9, eighth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The fourth challenge identified in this study was algorithmic bias in AI-generated content. Several informants with relatively advanced levels of AI literacy had begun to recognize that AI systems tend to produce perspectives that favor particular viewpoints, overlook local contexts, and demonstrate limited sensitivity to the cultural diversity and Islamic values that characterize the UINSU academic community. One informant stated:

> *"AI is certainly helpful, but when it is used to discuss Islamic issues on campus, the results are often not entirely relevant to the conditions here. Therefore, I still have to make extensive revisions." (Informant 10, eighth-semester student, interview conducted on May 26, 2026).*

The findings concerning algorithmic bias in the UINSU context broaden the international academic discourse on algorithmic bias, which has predominantly examined English-language content and Western contexts. Luo and Joo (2024) identified algorithmic bias in AI-generated news, particularly in relation to gender and racial or ethnic representation. The present study indicates another possible dimension of algorithmic bias, namely cultural-religious bias. AI systems trained on datasets predominantly shaped by secular and Western perspectives may have limited capacity to accommodate the nuances of Islamic values and local Indonesian contexts. This finding offers an original contribution to the literature on AI and journalism, in which cultural-religious dimensions of algorithmic bias remain relatively underexplored.

AI Literacy and Journalistic Ethics as Determinants of Practice Quality

The findings consistently demonstrate that students' level of AI literacy constitutes one of the most significant factors determining the quality and responsibility of technology use in journalistic practice. Students with higher levels of AI literacy tended to use technology more critically, selectively, and responsibly. They were generally able to recognize when AI could be relied upon and when its outputs needed to be questioned and subjected to further verification. By contrast, students with lower levels of AI literacy tended to interact with technology passively and uncritically, making them more vulnerable to the previously identified risks (Supriyadi, 2024).

With regard to journalistic ethics, the findings indicate that students with a strong understanding of ethical principles were better able to establish clear boundaries for AI use. They

employed AI as a supporting tool to facilitate journalistic work while retaining full control over substantive editorial decisions. The Indonesian Press Council (2025) emphasizes that the principles of accuracy, verification, and editorial responsibility cannot be delegated to algorithmic systems. The present findings confirm that students' internalization of these principles serves as an effective safeguard against the misuse of AI in journalistic practice. One informant with a well-developed understanding of journalistic ethics stated:

> *"In my view, AI is only a tool. When used properly, it can be extremely helpful, but without an understanding of journalistic ethics, it can instead damage our credibility." (Informant 2, eighth-semester student, interview conducted on May 27, 2026).*

Within the context of an Islamic higher education institution such as UINSU, journalistic ethics are further enriched by Islamic values that emphasize honesty (shidq), justice ('adl), and responsibility (amanah) in disseminating information to the public. Saragih and Siregar (2026) explain that prophetic journalism, which integrates Islamic values with digital competencies, represents a relevant model for development in Islamic higher education institutions. Such a model is important for preparing future journalists who are not only technologically competent but also morally grounded.

Relevance to the Vision of Golden Indonesia 2045

The findings are highly relevant to the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045, which emphasizes the development of excellent, adaptive, and globally competitive human resources. UINSU journalism students who are able to integrate AI critically and ethically into their journalistic practices represent a concrete example of the human resource profile required to realize this national vision. The Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas (2024) emphasizes that Indonesia's younger generation must be capable of mastering digital technologies, including AI, not merely as passive users but as active agents who employ technology critically, creatively, and responsibly for national advancement.

In this context, the transformation of UINSU students' journalistic practices, which demonstrates adaptability to AI while remaining grounded in strong literacy and ethical principles, constitutes a meaningful contribution to the development of a healthy, accountable, and high-quality digital information ecosystem in Indonesia. Students who are currently learning to integrate AI responsibly into journalistic practice are likely to become future journalists who are not only technologically proficient but also committed to safeguarding the quality of public information as a foundation of Indonesia's digital democracy on the path toward Golden Indonesia 2045 (Kusnadi, 2023).

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that AI has become integrated into several stages of journalistic practice among UINSU students, particularly idea generation, news-angle formulation, preliminary information mapping, writing, and editing. However, these changes should not be interpreted as the automatic and uniform effects of technology on all students. The same platforms produced different patterns of use. Some students positioned AI as a source of inspiration and a tool for refinement after independently preparing an initial draft, whereas others had previously accepted or copied AI-generated outputs without adequate scrutiny. These variations suggest that technology influences the pace, choices, and structure of journalistic work but does not entirely determine its final outcomes. From the perspective of critical technological determinism, AI creates new possibilities for action as well as new forms of pressure, while the realization of these possibilities remains shaped by users' knowledge, professional habits, and ethical considerations. The transformation is therefore more appropriately understood as a reconfiguration of the relationship between students and technology rather than the replacement of human roles by machines. AI expands production capacity, but the quality of its use depends on students' ability to retain control over substantive journalistic decisions (Beckett & Deuze, 2024; Sonni et al., 2024).

The use of AI to generate alternative news angles also indicates a transformation in the gatekeeping process. When students enter a topic into an AI platform and receive several recommended perspectives, the technology has already participated in determining which issues, facts, actors, and viewpoints become initially visible to them. Although AI does not directly determine the final content to be published, its preliminary outputs shape the range of possibilities considered throughout the news production process. This condition reflects the emergence of hybrid gatekeeping, in which information selection occurs through interaction among algorithmic systems, students as prospective journalists, and editors or lecturers as professional supervisors. Under this arrangement, gatekeeping power does not disappear but is distributed across multiple actors operating according to different logics.

Algorithms operate on the basis of data patterns and probability, whereas journalists are expected to act according to public relevance, verification, context, and the social consequences of reporting. When students accept AI recommendations without questioning the basis on which they were generated, the information-selection process may become less transparent because perspectives excluded by the system may never be considered. This finding reinforces the continuing importance of human gatekeeping in safeguarding the diversity of perspectives and public trust in journalistic information (Scheffauer et al., 2024).

The experiences of students who used AI-generated information but were unable to identify its sources reveal a deeper issue than a technical failure to provide references. Such practices indicate a transfer of epistemic authority from verifiable sources to fluent and seemingly convincing linguistic outputs. Under these conditions, the linguistic quality of AI responses may function as a false signal of credibility, leading students to regard information as accurate not because they have identified supporting evidence, but because it is presented coherently. This phenomenon may be described as epistemic outsourcing, namely the delegation of parts of the processes of information retrieval, evaluation, and knowledge justification to systems that bear no journalistic responsibility. Consequently, AI literacy should not be understood merely as the ability to construct prompts or generate responses that satisfy users' needs. In journalism, AI literacy must include the capacity to trace sources, recognize uncertainty, compare system outputs with primary data, identify unverifiable information, and transparently explain the limits of AI use. The Indonesian Press Council's guidelines similarly emphasize that AI serves only as an assisting technology, while responsibility for the accuracy and consequences of journalistic work remains with human actors. Within the UINSU context, this obligation simultaneously operationalizes the values of shidq and amanah through verification, attribution, and editorial accountability (Indonesian Press Council, 2025; Jaakkola, 2023).

The findings concerning efficiency and dependence reveal a paradox in the use of AI. On the one hand, students stated that AI shortened the time required to prepare journalistic texts, allowing them to allocate more time to conducting interviews and completing the necessary data. On the other hand, some students felt that their writing abilities weakened when they were required to work without AI assistance. These two experiences indicate that technological efficiency does not automatically improve journalistic quality. Its impact depends on how students use the time and cognitive energy saved through technology. When AI is used to handle mechanical tasks and the remaining time is reinvested in observation, interviewing, fact-checking, and argument development, the technology functions as an enhancement of journalistic capacity. Conversely, when AI replaces the processes of discovering facts, constructing reasoning, and writing independently, efficiency becomes a form of skill substitution that may lead to deskilling. Therefore, the principal issue lies not merely in the intensity of AI use but in the types of journalistic activities delegated to the technology. This interpretation suggests the need for a staged model of AI use, such as requiring students to prepare an initial draft, document primary sources, and evaluate the changes introduced by AI before a text is published (Jaakkola, 2023; Sonni et al., 2024).

The informants' statements that AI-generated outputs were less appropriate when used to address Islamic issues within the campus environment should be interpreted cautiously. Given the limited scope of the study, these experiences are insufficient to establish the existence of a new form of universally applicable "cultural-religious bias." A more proportionate interpretation is that the findings indicate contextual incongruity or algorithmic decontextualization, referring to the tendency of AI systems to generate generic responses that may not adequately represent the language, social experiences, values, and knowledge structures of local communities. AI outputs are shaped by patterns embedded in training data, whereas journalistic practice at UINSU requires an understanding of Islamic institutional contexts and the social dynamics of North Sumatra, which may not be sufficiently represented in such datasets. When decontextualized outputs are used without adequate editing, local voices may be displaced by more general and dominant explanatory frameworks. At this point, prophetic journalism can function as an evaluative framework rather than merely as a normative ideal. The principle of shidq requires factual accuracy, amanah emphasizes responsibility for the consequences of information, tabligh demands clear and contextually appropriate communication, while fathanah requires critical intelligence in assessing the limitations of technology (Siregar & Saragih, 2026; Zahara & Saragih, 2026).

This study demonstrates that the relationship between AI and students' journalistic practices is relational, multilayered, and not entirely deterministic. Technology influences how students generate ideas, select information, construct texts, and distribute content, yet this influence is mediated by AI literacy, journalistic experience, editorial supervision, and the internalization of ethical values. The contribution of this study therefore does not lie in proving that AI has universally transformed students'

journalistic practices, but in providing a contextual explanation of the mechanisms through which such transformation occurs among Communication Studies students at UINSU. The findings indicate that the competencies required to support the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045 cannot be limited to the ability to use technology rapidly and productively. Prospective journalists must also be able to preserve human authority in information-selection processes, assess the accuracy of algorithmic outputs, disclose the use of AI transparently, and consider the public interest. The practical implication is the need for project-based journalism education that integrates AI-assisted practice, cross-verification, source auditing, ethical reflection, and the evaluation of local contexts. Student press organizations may be positioned as laboratories for implementing human-in-the-loop journalism, in which AI is used to expand students' capacities without diminishing their editorial responsibility and journalistic integrity (Indonesian Press Council, 2025; Jaakkola, 2023; Sonni et al., 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of artificial intelligence has transformed the journalistic practices of students in the Communication Studies Program at UINSU, particularly in idea generation, preliminary information mapping, news-structure development, text editing, and digital content distribution. This transformation did not occur uniformly because students' use of AI was shaped by their level of AI literacy, journalistic experience, verification skills, and ethical understanding. AI can improve efficiency, broaden the exploration of perspectives, and support the refinement of journalistic texts when it is positioned as an assisting tool under human control. Conversely, its use without critical evaluation may result in technological dependence, the acceptance of unverified information, the erosion of originality, and outputs that do not adequately reflect the social, cultural, and Islamic contexts of UINSU. These findings demonstrate that the relationship between technology and journalistic practice is not deterministic but is formed through the interaction of users' competencies, algorithmic logic, editorial supervision, and the values of prophetic journalism. Accordingly, preparing prospective journalists for Golden Indonesia 2045 requires more than the ability to operate AI technologies. It also requires competence in source verification, the preservation of independent editorial judgment, an understanding of algorithmic limitations, and accountability for the consequences of published information. In practical terms, UINSU should integrate AI literacy, digital verification, transparency in technology use, and Islamic journalistic ethics into practice-based learning. Nevertheless, the findings should be understood as a contextual representation of the students involved in this study and are not intended to be generalized to all students or higher education institutions in Indonesia.

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Vol. 15 No. 4 (2026) | Page: 1465-1475
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