



UTILIZATION OF CHATGPT IN THE PRODUCTION PROCESS OF JOURNALIST NEWS IN THE MIMBAR UMUM MEDAN NEWSPAPER

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ABSTRACT

The development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is beginning to transform news production practices, including in local print media. This study aims to analyze the use of ChatGPT in the news production process at the Mimbar Umum Medan newspaper, while also examining journalists' perceptions of its use and its implications for journalistic professionalism and ethics. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study method through in-depth interviews, observations of editorial workflows, and documentation studies. The research findings indicate that ChatGPT is used limitedly as a technical tool, primarily for generating news ideas, composing initial drafts, refining language, and summarizing supporting documents. The novelty of this study lies in the finding that in the context of local media, the use of ChatGPT has not led to editorial automation, but rather to a pattern of augmented journalism that still places journalists and editors as the primary controllers of editorial decisions. On the one hand, this use improves work efficiency and manuscript readability. On the other hand, there are risks of inaccuracy, information bias, and technological dependency if not accompanied by rigorous verification. Thus, ChatGPT functions more as a supporting instrument than a replacement for human journalistic work.

Keywords: ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, digital journalism, news production, journalistic ethics

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the journalism landscape, not only at the level of information distribution but also in the news production process in the newsroom. Journalists now work in a media ecosystem that demands speed, flexibility, and the ability to process large volumes of information quickly. In this context, digital transformation is no longer simply the introduction of new platforms; it also shifts journalistic work patterns toward practices that increasingly rely on computational tools, algorithms, and partial automation. Therefore, discussions of contemporary journalism cannot be separated from the changing relationship between journalists' professional work, digital technology, and the logic of efficient news production (Pavlik, 2013; Deuze, 2017).

One of the most prominent developments in the latest phase of this transformation is the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT. OpenAI explains that ChatGPT is a model designed to interact dialogically and generate responses based on user instructions, enabling its use in a variety of language-based activities, including idea development, information summarization, and initial text generation (OpenAI, 2022). In the realm of journalism, the emergence of this technology has broadened the scope of computational journalism, namely the use of computational systems to support journalistic objectives at the stages of news collection, production, verification, and distribution (Diakopoulos, 2019; Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). With these capabilities, ChatGPT is beginning to be considered not as a complete replacement for journalists, but as an instrument with the potential to accelerate editorial work processes, particularly in technical and repetitive tasks.

Globally, the discourse on AI in journalism is evolving rapidly and is increasingly shifting from the issue of automated journalism to the use of large language models in newsrooms. Recent bibliometric and thematic reviews show a significant surge in AI-journalism research after 2020, with a primary focus on issues of automation, misinformation, accountability, and ethical governance. However, this research also highlights the continued gap in representation from Global South countries, including in understanding how AI is practiced in media organizations with limited resources and lacking established digital infrastructure (Molla & Ahsan, 2025). In other words, academic debates to date have largely been constructed within the context of large media outlets or relatively developed newsroom ecosystems, thus failing to fully explain how AI is being used in local media outlets with their distinct editorial work styles.

In the Indonesian context, the use of AI in the media is indeed emerging, but its integration is still relatively new and not yet fully supported by sound ethical standards and editorial guidelines. A report by the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) indicates that several media outlets in Indonesia have begun experimenting with AI in their editorial operations, but the adoption process remains fraught with serious issues related to journalistic integrity, accountability, and the public interest. Similarly, Besman and Evita (2024) assert that the practice of semi-automated journalism in Indonesia faces major challenges, including the lack of transparency in AI use, the potential for algorithmic bias, and concerns about content quality if human oversight is not strictly enforced. These findings suggest that the primary issue in AI adoption in Indonesian media lies not solely in its technological capabilities, but in how it is negotiated with professional ethics, editorial routines, and human editorial authority. Nevertheless, previous research on AI and journalism in Indonesia tends to focus on normative, ethical, or general studies of the potential and risks of AI in the media industry. Empirical studies exploring how ChatGPT is used in the daily news production process, at what stages it actually operates, how journalists interpret its presence, and how editors maintain editorial control are still relatively limited, particularly in local print media. Yet, local media have distinct characteristics from national media or digital-native newsrooms: human resources are more limited, journalists' multitasking burdens are higher, and the technology adaptation process is more pragmatic. This research gap lies within this study. This article not only discusses AI as a general phenomenon in journalism, but also focuses on the concrete practice of utilizing ChatGPT in *Koran Mimbar Umum Medan*, a local print media that finds

itself at the crossroads between demands for digital efficiency and the obligation to maintain journalistic standards.

Based on this description, this research aims to answer three main questions. First, how is ChatGPT utilized in the news production process at the *Mimbar Umum Medan* newspaper? Second, what are journalists' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT in daily journalistic practice? Third, what are the implications of ChatGPT's use for professionalism, ethics, and the quality of journalistic products? With these research questions, it is hoped that this research will emphasize that the issue of AI in journalism cannot be understood solely at the technological level, but must be read as a matter of editorial practice, professional responsibility, and ethical negotiation in local journalistic work in the digital era.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a single case study design. This approach was chosen because the research seeks to deeply understand the practice of utilizing ChatGPT in the news production process, editorial actors' perceptions of the technology, and its implications for journalistic professionalism and ethics in the real context of local media newsrooms. Case studies are relevant when researchers want to examine contemporary phenomena contextually, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its social environment are not entirely clear (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). In this study, *Koran Mimbar Umum Medan* was chosen as a single case because it represents a local print media that is adapting to digital transformation, has limited editorial resources, but has begun to adopt ChatGPT as a journalistic tool. Therefore, this case was chosen not solely for research access, but also for its significance in understanding how AI technology is negotiated within local journalistic practices that have not yet been fully digitized.

The research location is the *Koran Mimbar Umum Medan* newsroom. The research subjects consisted of three key informants purposively selected based on their direct involvement in news production and the use or oversight of ChatGPT within the editorial environment. The three informants were: (1) an editor-in-chief who plays a role in editorial decision-making; (2) an editor/editor responsible for editing, quality control, and ethical compliance of manuscripts; and (3) a general desk reporter involved in field coverage and news writing. These informants were selected to capture the experience of using ChatGPT from three different editorial positions: editorial policy, technical oversight, and day-to-day journalistic operational practices. Purposive sampling was used because this study requires informants who truly understand the phenomenon under study, rather than a large number of respondents (Patton, 2015). Based on the article data, the informants also have approximately three to four years of editorial work experience, making them sufficiently representative to explain the dynamics of technology adaptation in local media.

Data collection was conducted through three techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentary study. In-depth interviews were used to explore informants' experiences regarding ChatGPT usage, reasons for its use, perceived benefits, risks encountered, and ethical boundaries applied in the news

production process. A semi-structured format was chosen to provide a systematic guide for the questions, while still allowing informants to elaborate on their experiences and reflections more broadly and in-depth (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In practice, the interviews focused on three main issues: the stages of journalistic work involving ChatGPT, journalists' and editors' perceptions of the technology, and its implications for news accuracy, professionalism, and quality. In addition to interviews, this study utilized non-participant observation of the editorial workflow. Observations focused on the process of coverage planning, scriptwriting, editing, the use of digital devices, and interaction patterns between journalists and editors when utilizing ChatGPT as a technical tool. Non-participant observation was chosen to allow researchers to directly observe ongoing practices without being involved in the news production process. This allowed the data obtained to confirm or correct interview data.

Data analysis was conducted in stages by combining interactive and thematic analysis models. Initially, all interview data was transcribed, then combined with observation notes and documentation. The next stage was data condensation, which selected, focused, and simplified the data to align with the research focus, namely the form of ChatGPT utilization, journalists' perceptions, and their implications for professionalism, ethics, and the quality of journalistic products (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). After that, the researcher conducted open coding of the units of meaning that emerged from the data, such as "idea aids," "work efficiency," "language editing," "risk of inaccuracy," "technology dependence," and "editorial control." These initial codes were then regrouped into larger categories through axial coding, for example, the technical functions of ChatGPT, journalists' adaptive-critical perceptions, and editorial ethical control mechanisms. In the final stage, these categories were synthesized into key research themes through selective coding and conceptually interpreted with reference to the frameworks of augmented journalism, digital journalism, and the human-in-the-loop principle (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Diakopoulos, 2019). This step enabled the analysis process to move beyond data description and toward a more analytical, thematic reading.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Utilization of ChatGPT as Artificial Intelligence in the News Production Process at Mimbar Umum Newspaper

Interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that ChatGPT at Mimbar Umum Newspaper, Medan, has not been used as an editorial automation system, but rather as a technical tool to support journalists in the early stages of news production. Its use is particularly evident in the pre-production phase, when journalists need assistance in generating ideas, formulating perspectives, developing initial story outlines, and organizing raw information. In this context, ChatGPT functions as a supporting instrument to expedite the initial writing process, especially when journalists are working under deadline pressure. These findings suggest that AI integration in local media is limited, selective, and based on the practical needs of the editorial team, rather than a full-blown structural change in the journalistic work system.

Empirically, ChatGPT's use is most prominent in the process of brainstorming and preparing initial drafts. One journalist stated, "ChatGPT helps me with ideas and initial drafts, but I still have to manually check the field and facts." This quote demonstrates that

journalists utilize ChatGPT not to replace core journalistic work, but rather to facilitate the initial technical and exploratory stages. Thus, ChatGPT's primary function in the *Mimbar Umum* editorial team is more like a brainstorming tool and initial drafting tool than a primary source of information. Here, journalists remain dominant, as the AI output still requires further validation through live coverage and factual verification.

Further findings indicate that after the ideation stage, ChatGPT is also used to refine writing structure, improve sentence structure, simplify language, and summarize supporting documents such as press releases or lengthy interview transcripts. Editors explained that ChatGPT output is used to help make manuscripts more coherent, particularly for light news, personality profiles, or data-driven reports, but it is never accepted as a final draft. In practice, AI-generated text remains treated as raw material that must be edited, refined, and aligned to editorial standards. This pattern demonstrates that ChatGPT's use in the *Mimbar Umum* newspaper emphasizes technical writing efficiency rather than delegation of editorial authority.

The editors emphasized the limits of this use more explicitly, stating, "AI is just a tool. The decision on newsworthiness remains ours." This statement is significant because it emphasizes that amidst the adoption of AI technology, the line between technical assistance and editorial authority remains clear. ChatGPT may assist with language and structure processing, but it is not given the authority to determine newsworthiness, factual accuracy, or the interpretation of events. In other words, the *Mimbar Umum* editorial team subordinates AI to human control, allowing journalistic decisions to remain determined by the professional judgment of journalists and editors.

When viewed through digital journalism theory, these findings suggest that the use of ChatGPT at *Mimbar Umum* is a response to the demands of increasingly fast-paced, adaptive, and technology-driven media work. Pavlik (2013) and Deuze (2017) explain that digital transformation has transformed the news production process by increasing pressure on journalists for speed, flexibility, and multitasking. In the context of local media, these pressures appear to be responded to not by building complex newsroom automation, but by pragmatically utilizing ChatGPT to assist with time-consuming technical tasks. Therefore, the findings of this study show that digitalization in local media does not always come in the form of sophisticated systems, but can emerge as the use of simple yet functional AI tools to speed up the rhythm of news production.

This finding is more accurately explained through the concept of augmented journalism rather than automated journalism. Carlson (2015) views automated journalism as a form of news production carried out automatically by algorithmic systems, while Diakopoulos (2019) and Graefe (2016) emphasize that AI can also function as a tool that strengthens journalists' capacity without replacing human judgment. In the case of *Koran Mimbar Umum*, ChatGPT clearly did not operate as an autonomous news producer, as it only assisted with ideation, drafting, and language refinement, while verification, contextual interpretation, and determining newsworthiness remained human. This is where this finding becomes crucial: in local media, the use of AI does not lead to the replacement of journalists, but rather to an augmentative pattern that is situational, individual, and controlled by the editorial structure.

From a journalistic ethics perspective, this form of utilization also confirms the efficacy of the human-in-the-loop principle in local newsroom practices. Human involvement

remains a key requirement, as ChatGPT lacks the fact-verification capabilities, local context sensitivity, or moral judgment required in journalistic work. The finding that all AI output is subject to correction, editing, and reassessment by journalists and editors demonstrates the editorial team's efforts to maintain the accuracy, credibility, and integrity of news stories amidst the use of new technologies. Thus, the use of ChatGPT in *Mimbar Umum* newspaper is not a practice of handing over journalistic work to machines, but rather a collaborative model where AI is used for technical efficiency, while epistemic and ethical authority remains with humans (Diakopoulos, 2020; Bender et al., 2021). This distinguishes the local media context in Medan from the common image of AI journalism, which is often associated with full automation: what is occurring is instead a limited, selective, and cautious adaptation.

Journalists' Perceptions and Attitudes Toward the Use of ChatGPT in Journalistic Practice

Interviews indicate that journalists and editors at the *Mimbar Umum Medan* newspaper have a generally positive perception of ChatGPT, but this acceptance is not unconditional. Rather, the attitudes they display demonstrate a combination of openness to technological innovation and professional prudence in upholding journalistic standards. Informants view ChatGPT as a tool that can expedite editorial work, especially in the early stages of writing, but it should not be positioned as a substitute for journalism. Thus, the perceptions formed are not technological euphoria, but rather adaptive-critical attitudes born of the practical needs of the newsroom as well as an awareness of professional ethics. These findings demonstrate that technology acceptance in local media occurs through a process of negotiation between demands for efficiency and a commitment to accuracy and public responsibility.

Implications of ChatGPT Utilization for Professionalism, Ethics, and the Quality of Journalistic Products

The results indicate that the use of ChatGPT in journalistic practice at the *Mimbar Umum Medan* newspaper impacts journalists' professionalism, the application of journalistic ethics, and the quality of the news products produced. Based on in-depth interviews, the use of artificial intelligence is understood as a tool to support editorial work, not as a primary actor in news production. This understanding is an important foundation for maintaining journalistic professionalism amidst the ongoing digital transformation in newsrooms.

At the work experience level, journalists feel that ChatGPT helps save time in initial research, brainstorming, and developing initial news outlines. This is evident in one journalist's statement: "ChatGPT helps me when I'm brainstorming ideas and drafting initial drafts, but I still have to manually check the field and facts." This quote demonstrates that journalists are not completely handing over the journalistic process to AI, but rather using it as a starting point to simplify technical work. At the same time, this statement contains a clear normative boundary: field reporting and fact-checking remain core journalistic tasks that cannot be transferred to machines. Therefore, the positive perception of ChatGPT among journalists is actually framed by the awareness that AI is only useful to the extent that it does not compromise the fundamental principle of verification.

A similar attitude is evident at the editor level, but with a stronger emphasis on the limits of editorial control. This is reflected in the editor's statement: "AI is just a tool. The decision about newsworthiness remains in our hands." This statement indicates that the editor accepts the use of ChatGPT to some extent, particularly to assist with technical tasks such as language editing or preparing initial drafts, but rejects the possibility of delegating editorial authority to technology. From an institutional perspective, this stance confirms that the editorial board still maintains that humans are the final arbiters of the quality, worthiness, and integrity of news content. Thus, the editor's perception of ChatGPT is not simply about functional benefits, but also about safeguarding journalistic authority structures from shifting excessively into the hands of algorithmic systems.

When analyzed from a digital journalism perspective, this adaptive yet critical stance can be understood as a response to the pressures of an increasingly fast-paced and competitive media work environment. In digital journalism, technology is often embraced because it helps journalists work more efficiently, quickly, and flexibly in managing information (Pavlik, 2013; Deuze, 2017). However, findings at the *Mimbar Umum* newspaper suggest that this acceptance does not automatically translate into complete trust in AI. It's precisely because journalists work at a high production pace that they need tools like ChatGPT, but they also recognize that accelerating work can risk compromising quality if not balanced with rigorous auditing. Here, it's clear that journalists' attitudes toward ChatGPT are shaped by two logics: digital efficiency and journalistic responsibility.

This finding aligns with the concept of augmented journalism, which positions AI as a supporting tool, not a replacement for human journalistic work. Diakopoulos (2019) asserts that AI can increase newsroom productivity, but cannot replace human judgment regarding social context, news relevance, and ethical considerations. In the case of *Koran Mimbar Umum*, journalists' perceptions of ChatGPT closely align with this framework. They accept AI as a productivity enhancer but consciously refuse to cede core functions such as verification, local context interpretation, and editorial decision-making. In other words, the attitudes of journalists in this local media outlet demonstrate that acceptance of technology does not equate to a weakening of the profession, but can instead serve as a reaffirmation of the boundaries of professionalism in a digital context.

On the other hand, concerns about inaccuracy, information bias, and technological dependency indicate that journalists' and editors' critical attitudes are rooted in an awareness of AI's epistemic limitations. Carlson (2015) warned that automation in journalism could displace journalists if the technology is not reflectively controlled, while Graefe (2016) asserted that AI is better suited to routine tasks than journalistic work that demands interpretation, empathy, and moral judgment. The findings of this study reinforce this view. Journalists and editors at the *Mimbar Umum* newspaper do not reject technology, but they remain suspicious of the possibility that excessive reliance on ChatGPT could weaken creative writing, critical thinking, and sensitivity to local contexts. This means that the critical attitude that emerged was not a form of resistance to innovation, but rather a protective mechanism to maintain professional quality amidst the penetration of AI into the newsroom.

Journalists' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT in journalistic practice at the *Mimbar Umum* newspaper can be formulated as a limited acceptance guided by professional and ethical logic. ChatGPT is accepted because it can improve work

efficiency, but this acceptance is always accompanied by normative constraints that technology should not replace fieldwork, fact-checking, and editorial decisions. These findings make an important contribution because they demonstrate that in the local media context, AI adoption is not moving toward full automation, but rather toward pragmatic, selective, and human-controlled usage patterns. In this context, the concept of human-in-the-loop becomes highly relevant, as the quality and integrity of news stories remain dependent on the extent to which journalists and editors maintain their roles as key decision-makers (Diakopoulos, 2020). Thus, journalists' attitudes toward ChatGPT not only reflect technological adaptation but also serve as an indicator of how the journalism profession strives to maintain its authority amidst digital transformation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of ChatGPT in the news production process at the *Mimbar Umum Medan* newspaper occurs in a limited, selective, and controlled manner, namely as a technical aid in the pre-production and early production stages, not as a replacement for human journalistic work. These findings confirm that in the local media context, the adoption of artificial intelligence reflects more of a form of editorial augmentation rather than full automation, as core functions such as reporting, fact-checking, newsworthiness assessment, and editorial decisions remain in the hands of journalists and editors. On the one hand, the use of ChatGPT has been proven to help work efficiency, accelerate the preparation of initial drafts, and improve the readability of manuscripts; however, on the other hand, this technology also carries the risk of inaccuracy, information bias, and dependency if not accompanied by strict oversight. Thus, the main contribution of this study lies in affirming that the integration of AI in local journalism must be understood as a collaborative practice based on human control, so that its use needs to be placed within a framework of professional responsibility, ethical prudence, and clear editorial policies to maintain the quality and integrity of journalistic products.

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