

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Incursion of Artificial Intelligence into News Production: Will AI Revive Journalism?*

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into news production processes and analyzes its implications for journalism within independent digital news media in Türkiye. The research is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 29 participants, including 24 journalists and 5 experts. From a political economy perspective, the findings reveal that precarity and loss of professional control are the most significant concerns among journalists. Nevertheless, participants perceive AI technologies not only as a threat but also as an opportunity to liberate journalism from its profit-oriented structure. In particular, automation of routine news, visual content, and voiceovers is considered a way to enable journalists to focus on more qualitative, long-form, and investigative reporting. However, the study shows that the controlling power of AI in news distribution and content filtering is largely overlooked, which constitutes a blind spot in Türkiye's media ecosystem. Limited financial and technical resources further restrict AI integration to basic functions. The study concludes that unless economic and ethical issues are addressed, AI will inevitably be instrumentalized for the needs of the capitalist market. Ensuring human oversight, adherence to ethical principles, and structural policies that support independent media organizations emerge as crucial conditions for safeguarding the future of journalism.

Keywords: Journalism, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Media, News Production, Automation

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Öz

Bu çalışma, yapay zekânın (YZ) haber üretim süreçlerine entegrasyonunu inceleyerek, Türkiye'deki bağımsız dijital haber medyasında gazetecilik mesleğine yansımalarını analiz etmektedir. Araştırma, 24 gazeteci ve 5 uzmandan oluşan toplam 29 katılımcıyla yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanmaktadır. Ekonomi politik perspektifle yürütülen analizlerde, gazetecilerin en önemli kaygılarının güvencesizlik ve mesleki kontrol kaybı olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bununla birlikte, görüşmeler YZ teknolojilerini yalnızca tehdit değil, aynı zamanda gazeteciliği ticarileşmiş yapıya dönüştürerek bir fırsat olarak da değerlendirmektedir. Özellikle rutin haberlerin, görsel içeriklerin ve seslendirmelerin otomasyonu sayesinde gazetecilerin daha nitelikli, uzun soluklu ve araştırmacı haberlere yönelebileceği vurgulanmaktadır. Ancak bulgular, YZ'nin haber dağıtım ve içerik filtreleme süreçlerindeki kontrol gücünün büyük ölçüde göz ardı edildiğini ve bunun Türkiye'deki haber ekosisteminin kör noktası olduğunu göstermektedir. Katılımcıların sınırlı finansal ve teknik kaynaklara sahip olması, YZ entegrasyonunu daha çok temel işlevlerle sınırlı kılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak araştırma, ekonomik ve etik sorunlar çözülmedikçe YZ'nin sermaye odaklı piyasa yapısının çıkarlarına hizmet etmesinin kaçınılmaz olacağını ortaya koymaktadır. Gazetecilik mesleğinin geleceği için insan denetimi, etik ilkelere bağlılık ve bağımsız medya kuruluşlarını destekleyecek yapısal politikaların hayati öneme sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gazetecilik, Yapay Zeka, Dijital Medya, Haber Üretimi, Otomasyon

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Introduction

Rapid developments in artificial intelligence (AI) not only transformed the internet of things, but also challenged the landscape of journalism. Automation of journalistic practices from news production to distribution offers opportunities such as cost reduction and time efficiency. However, the capitalist socio-economic system embedded in AI technologies creates a structure in which the new media sphere becomes a reproduction environment of existing power relations. In this respect, concepts of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and data colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019) provide a better understanding about the motives behind the infrastructure of AI. Zuboff's (2019) analysis of surveillance capitalism points out that data extraction and algorithmic optimization serve corporate accumulation rather than public needs. From a similar perspective, Couldry and Mejias (2019) discuss that data-driven information infrastructure establish a form of data colonialism, which harbors the political and economic interests of dominant actors into technological structures. Thus, AI in journalism should be perceived as an extension of capital and ideology that reproduces asymmetries of power. In that sense, described as "[t]he term ... frequently applied to ... developing systems endowed with the intellectual processes, characteristic of humans, such as the ability to reason, discover meaning, generalize, or learn from past experience", AI came into our lives more as a disruptive innovation rather than a revolution (Copeland, 2024). Therefore, the choice of OECD countries to refer to AI as AI system underlines its social, political and economic implications. Within this context, AI system is a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content recommendations, or decisions that influence physical or virtual environments. Different AI systems vary in their levels of autonomy and adaptiveness after deployment. (Grobelsnik, et al., 2024)

This elaborate definition also highlights how AI technologies are susceptible to instrumentalization by profit-driven private corporations and governments that aim to control information flow. As Dia-

kopoulos (2023) argues, AI systems are able to aggravate the commodification of journalism through automating content production and distribution while intensifying control on information and undermining editorial independence. Highlighting the paradigm shift in journalism initiated by AI systems, RSF's Paris Charter on AI and Journalism (2023) stresses the need to preserve ethical principles of journalism as well as its economic viability, which requires journalists' active participation in the process of AI governance. In order to call the U.S. Congress to take action against the threats posed by AI, unions such as the News Guild-Communications Workers of America, the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians, Writers Guild of America East and Writers Guild of America West wrote a letter demanding the protection of the journalistic work against AI and a collective bargain on AI policies in the work environment (Entralgo, 2024). The recent layoffs in news organizations should be approached as a warning sign for the precarious work conditions caused by AI technologies. For instance, Business Insider laid off 21 percent of its employees citing the increase usage of AI as a reason in an internal memo (Reuters, 2025). Associated Press, Fortune and Bloomberg Media are among the media outlets that laid off its personnel due to the latest challenges in the media market (Reuters, 2024; Tobitt, 2025; Moses, 2025). As suggested by some researchers, unionized media organizations better perform in terms of job security and training support of journalists for new technologies (Diakopoulos, 2023; Salamon, 2024). Thus, this study embraces a political economy approach to contextualize how AI transforms journalism in Türkiye.

While presenting the risks posed by AI technologies, most international and national studies argue that journalism should benefit from the opportunities that AI has to offer. In this respect, AI is found to be effective for automation practices such as routine news reporting and data analysis (Londoño-Proañó and Buele, 2025; Gül, 2024; Peña-Fernández, et al., 2023; Isik, et al., 2022; Noain-Sánchez, 2022; Tejedor & Vila, 2021; Túnuez-López, et al., 2021). Moran and Jawaid Shaikh (2022) find out that journalists who are responsible

from economic well-being of the organization (i.e. executives and funders) are more likely to embrace AI technologies and journalists who work on the ground are more skeptical towards the AI integration into the journalistic practices (p. 1769). However, replacement of journalists by automation depends on journalists' adaptation to AI. The preparation for the upcoming technologies and developing smart technologies are in the hands of journalists to maintain control over their profession (Broussard, et al., 2019). Considering the current turmoil as an epistemic crisis, AI technologies might offer 'epistemic opportunities' to strengthen journalists' authority over their profession (Perreault, et al., 2025). To achieve that, journalists need to incorporate the ethical standards into the algorithmic practices, revise educational trainings to improve digital skills and reinstate their expertise in the workflow (Møller, et al., 2024). Furthermore, Elike (2023) suggests active participation of journalists in the design of AI technologies, development of strategic business plans and cooperation between news organizations and tech companies (p. 994). Therefore, adaptation of journalistic skills and integration of ethical principles into technological developments appear as essentials to preserve the authority of journalists.

Yet, the economic design of AI systems and the market structure of media emerge among the most important factors that have influence on journalism. The structure of AI is open to be shaped either in the hands of the authoritarian power or in the service of public good. If the latter prevails, then adapting AI technologies in the newsrooms might offer journalistic autonomy from the power figures such as the digital platforms as Diakopoulos (2023) suggests. Yet, the financial capability is the determinant factor in to what extent a media organization can adapt new technologies. Small-scale independent news organizations will struggle to afford the expenses on AI. This would conclude in buying independence and autonomy, which only the media conglomerates will be capable of. Consequently, independent digital news media face another financial burden to employ skilled labor and maintain the necessary hardware. This, eventually, leads to an increased dependence on the digital platforms that offer easier access to

AI services (Simon, 2022, p. 1838). As the hopes flourish for more independent journalism with each innovation, not before long, the relations of power supercede and journalism finds itself rather in another struggle. The flexible design structure of AI in the hands of private corporations causes opaque decision-making processes, i.e. content removal or promotion decisions. Thus, the ability of AI systems in terms of collecting and processing data without notifying users poses immense risks on media freedom (Haas, 2020, p. 2). Besides, the emergence of AI as an invasive controlling actor facilitates third parties to exercise power over the information flow that might lead to the disintegration of journalism as an institution (Simon, 2024, p. 166). For this reason, the audience should be cautious about AI filtering mechanisms that value attention-catching and engagement-oriented content for profit rather than quality leading to the dominance of radical and polarized content in the online environment (Haas, 2020, p. 3). The Freedom on the Net 2023 report pointed out that the departments such as trust and safety, content moderation, human rights and public policy were the most affected teams during the mass layoffs in Twitter/X, Meta, Google, Microsoft, Twitch and Snap (Freedom House, 2023, pp. 20-21). This employment policy of the digital platforms demonstrates the importance given to the healthy information ecosystem by the profit-oriented corporations.

Furthermore, opaque decision-making processes of AI systems complicates news distribution even more due to the algorithmic bias and manipulation. Automation enabled by AI technologies is able to control each step of the information flow from making decisions about the circulation of content to how it is delivered to the audience. Within the context of its journalistic usage enabled in the digital platforms, Simon (2022) demonstrates four stages of AI's function in news production and distribution illuminating in what ways it could analyze and recommend content to the audience. "Selection of information" where AI makes decisions on what information to be produced, "production of news" in which it is utilized for creating, editing and archiving, in the third stage AI is used for personalization of news in the distribution process and in the last stage of "audience and

business analytics” AI functions for the prediction of audience behavior (Simon, 2022, p. 1834). Thus, in regimes governed by “authoritarian economic organisation of information” (Fuchs, 2020), AI is likely to become a medium of censorship and surveillance. Not only within the digital platforms, but also within the internet infrastructure such as internet service providers (ISPs) and hosting providers, AI systems could become more than a controlling mechanism for information dissemination. As already executed by the digital platforms in the form of automated content monitoring, AI systems will be deployed to filter content – in particular for “notice-and-takedown” decisions. Due to the multitude of daily content production, governments, ISPs and digital platforms incline to adopt automation to implement content removal decisions, which risks false takedowns and violation of media freedom and freedom of expression (Marsıf, et al., 2023, p. 100). Therefore, automation for time efficiency demands significant caution in terms of protecting human rights.

Vulnerability of media freedom caused by AI systems, in fact, starts at the infrastructural level. Adoption of AI technologies to function as a gatekeeper by ISPs can violate net neutrality and destabilize information ecosystem through practices such as zero-rating services, deep packet inspection, content blocking, bandwidth throttling and traffic prioritization (Digwatch, 2024). A brief online search confirms AI’s capacity to control information flow at the ISP level. Under cyber security services, AI solution companies offer infrastructure maintenance, automated network optimization that allows allocation of bandwidth and resources, tracking and prediction of the network traffic patterns services to ISPs. These companies advertise their business for their capacity to block illegal and threatening online activity with real-time detection. In spite that those services seem to serve to public good, they also pose a threat against different segments of civil society such as critical voices, investigative journalists and academics through AI systems’ ability to reach the source of online activity.

Global challenges in AI regulation and media freedom

The paradigm shift led by AI has caught governments and policymakers off guard. The confusion with how to integrate AI into daily life and political and economic systems channel governments to experiment in different approaches. As they seek to reap the benefits, they also make efforts to regulate it without being irrelevant and falling behind innovation. Learning from the past experiences with the digital platforms in which the regulatory frameworks were late to protect freedom of expression and market competition from opaque decision-making processes of the profit-driven digital platforms, European Union (EU) decided to take an early step to regulate AI technologies under a new legislation called the AI Act in 2024. While promoting the free market policy and innovation, the AI Act categorizes AI systems in four groups according to their risk levels: 1) unacceptable risk (i.e. social scoring systems and manipulative AI), 2) high risk (i.e. automated processing of personal data and detention of decision-making patterns), 3) limited risks (i.e. chatbots) and 4) minimal risk (i.e. AI-enabled video games and spam filters) (EU Artificial Intelligence Act, 2024). In addition, OSCE emphasizes two polar opposites of AI. Alongside with its capacity to enable censorship, manipulate public discourse and surveillance, AI systems can contribute to media freedom and freedom of expression as well (Haas, 2020). The emphasis of OSCE reiterates the fact that what guides technology is the interests of political and economic groups. Results of the Freedom on the Net 2023 report reflects this threat stating that the developments in AI technologies enable governments to implement concealed censorship with unprecedented accuracy (Freedom House, 2023, p. 13). For instance, the demand of BTK (Information and Communication Technologies Authority of Türkiye) from the ISPs to deliver the identities of the internet subscribers and their web traffic logs raised criticism of citizen surveillance and violation of privacy (Sarp Nebil, 2022). Such demands of the government authorities exemplify how governments could utilize the use of AI in cooperation with ISPs.

For this reason, an urgent need emerges to raise awareness for AI's responsible application considering the inclination towards its unethical usage. To highlight its ethical and effective use in journalism the Council of Europe (2023) published the "Guidelines on the Responsible Implementation of Artificial Intelligence Systems in Journalism". In reference to the Article 10 of Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms that guarantees freedom of expression and free information flow without state interference, the guideline argues that Article 10 indirectly includes AI systems, which indicates its compliance with human rights and extends to media professionals, digital platforms and ISPs as content producers and distributors (Council of Europe, 2023). In addition, the Council of Europe (2023) suggests the concept of journalistic artificial intelligence system to distinguish AI technologies that serve news production practices such as research, investigation, fact-checking, news writing and audio-visual content creation, as well as news distribution to customize and personalize news content, enhance news recommendation and audience engagement (p. 7). Therefore, the guideline urges AI providers to embrace transparency and to offer affordable products, and recommends public authorities to guarantee a competitive market and collaborate with news media and civil society (Council of Europe, 2023).

While Europe makes efforts to establish liberal and democratic values, governments in Asia pursue policies to tighten information control. For instance, the Chinese government has invested in the development of a national large language model that matches with the socialist principles of the country and supervises local AI companies on content filtering processes through a set of keywords and phrases (McMorrow & Hu, 2024). Russia is another country that instrumentalizes AI technologies to control information flow and online speech. Reporters Without Borders (2024) alerts international public about Roskomnadzor's (Russian federal information technologies and mass communication supervisory authority) experimentation with neural networks and large language models to extend its control over information flow. Iran, on

the other hand, prioritizes cyber security, dissemination of disinformation and citizen surveillance rather than the regulation of AI or investment on its own AI systems (Tkeshelashvili & Saade, 2024). All in all, innovation in AI technologies appear as a global phenomenon that majority of the states work to implement policies to take advantage from it.

Regardless of geopolitics and ideology, media freedom and freedom of expression are facing risks arising from governments and profit-oriented market structure of technology. The regulation attempts of Europe struggle to be effectively implemented as a result of several deregulatory steps in the name of encouraging innovation and market competition (Lazaro Cabrera, 2025). While the European liberal economic regime is unlikely to protect free speech, the oppressive political regimes in Asia are likely to further restrain freedoms. The global political and economic approach towards AI highlight the need for a structural transformation to guarantee a democratic and free information ecosystem.

AI landscape in Türkiye

According to the 2025 report issued by the Turkish Artificial Intelligence Initiative (TRAI) the number of AI start-ups reached 411, marking an approximately 17-fold increase since the foundation of the first AI initiative in 2017. Computer vision, machine learning, prediction and data analysis are three areas where Turkish AI initiatives prefer to be active the most (TRAI, 2024) and AI technologies are found to be more efficient in finance, transportation, energy and public services (TRAI, 2025). Aiming to prevent a monopolistic market structure and ensure the technological independence of Türkiye, the Digital Transformation Office and the Ministry of Industry and Technology introduced the National Technology Leap. Also, in accordance with the government's policies on information and communication technologies, the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2021-2025 was announced within the scope of the Digital Türkiye vision. The government commits to support and cooperate with the professionals to enhance the AI

infrastructure, regulate the AI industry and encourage the training of skilled workers and experts under this strategy. Additionally, the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2024-2025 Action Plan pledges to establish technical and ethical standards, develop a Turkish large language model and prepare educational materials to improve algorithmic thinking and AI-applied digital skills in children.

In Türkiye there is no regulation specific to AI, however a draft bill was proposed by a parliament member in June 2024. The draft bill offers eight articles that outlines the key concepts and institutions in the AI industry such as transparency, accountability, security and fairness. On the other hand, Ankara Chief Public Prosecution started an investigation against X's AI application Grok on the grounds of violating the law on crimes committed against Atatürk and insulting the religious values and the President. The prosecution imposed access blocking decision, which made Türkiye the first country that censors Grok (BBC, 2025). Türkiye's recent practice towards AI demonstrates that the government prioritizes the information control over guaranteeing media freedom and a healthy information ecosystem supported by AI technologies.

Nonetheless, non-governmental organizations continue to work proactively for the ethical adoption of AI systems. In 2019, the bars of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir issued the country's first report on AI and how to regulate it with a focus on regulatory challenges, i.e. copyright and patent, and ethical concerns (Kizrak, et al., 2019). Despite the efforts made by some parts of the society, Türkiye continues to remain as a follower of the global technological trends rather than acquiring a leading position.

Methodology

Building on the existing literature cited above, this research is based on the hypothesis that the political economic structure of AI technologies threatens media freedom by restructuring the news production and distribution processes. In order to understand and explore AI-led transformation in journalism, this research poses an analytic question

that illustrates how independent digital news media adapts AI technologies into the news production process. In order to develop an in-depth analysis, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists who work at independent digital native news media organizations and experts on media policies, communication infrastructure and digital platforms. The reason why the independent digital native news media has been chosen as the sampling group relies on two factors. First, being independent from any affiliations with a political or economic group would provide more accurate findings. Second, having started as only-digital would provide better understanding of how digital mechanisms work in the news production and distribution processes. Within this context, the interview questions consisted of how the interviewees approach AI, to what extent the interviewees have integrated the AI technologies into newsroom, whether they are concerned about employment, what concerns they have regarding to the incorporation of AI into the journalistic practices in terms of automation and its impact on news quality. However, the participants' lack of financial resources, technical skills and limited experience with AI became the limitations of this research.

The interviews were conducted between July and October 2024, and their duration ranged from 40 to 103 minutes. In total 61 potential participants were contacted who are journalists, management-level employees of the ISPs and digital platforms, and experts in media law, technology, telecommunications and digital platforms. Only 29 individuals confirmed the interview request. The other 32 either did not respond or initially accepted the request, but stopped responding in the interview scheduling process. Significantly, none of the management-level employees of the ISPs and digital platforms confirmed to participate in the research. Therefore, a total of 29 participants were interviewed, 24 of whom are journalists working at independent digital native news outlets and five are experts. In order to protect the privacy of the interviewees, their identities are anonymized and each of them has been given random numbers between 1 and 29 (i.e. Interviewee 1, Interviewee 12, Interviewee 23). At the time of the interviews, among

the journalist interviewees, three were owners of CEOs at their organizations, 11 held the title of editor-in-chief or coordinator, four were news coordinators, three editors, and the remaining three were either freelancer or self-employed. The expertise areas of the expert interviewees were as the following; two experts work on telecommunications and the internet infrastructure, one expert on internet governance and freedom of expression, one in media law and policies, and the remaining expert works on technology and digital platforms. The majority of the journalist interviewees who hold managerial positions have been in the industry for more than 20 years and have experience in both traditional and digital media. Many who held the positions of news coordinator and editor started their profession in digital outlets. The interviewees' current workplace at the time of the research were mostly founded after 2016 and born as independent digital-native news organizations. These organizations dominantly rely on advertising revenue generated from search engines and digital platforms, and also funding.

Table 1 below provides the participant categories at the time of the interviews, which allows readers to contextualize the interviewees' statements in relation to the subject matter.

Table 1. The Categories of the Interviewees

Owner/CEO	Interviewee 12
	Interviewee 19
	Interviewee 20
Editor-In-Chief/Coordinator	Interviewee 1
	Interviewee 3
	Interviewee 6
	Interviewee 7
	Interviewee 8
	Interviewee 15
	Interviewee 22
	Interviewee 25
	Interviewee 27
	Interviewee 28
News Coordinator	Interviewee 14
	Interviewee 16
	Interviewee 17
	Interviewee 21
Editor	Interviewee 2
	Interviewee 5
	Interviewee 11
Self Employed/Freelancer	Interviewee 4
	Interviewee 13
	Interviewee 23

Expert	Interviewee 9 (Expert on the telecommunications industry and the internet infrastructure)
	Interviewee 10 (Expert on technology and digital platforms)
	Interviewee 18 (Expert on the telecommunications industry and the internet infrastructure)
	Interviewee 24 (Expert on media law)
	Interviewee 26 (Expert on internet governance and free speech)

The interview data were systematically coded and statements with similar content were grouped under emerging themes. These themes were analyzed in an argumentative framework, supported by quotations from the interviewees. The findings section was structured around these thematic categories of journalists' view on AI regarding to precarity and unemployment, the significance of human in journalistic practices, the lack of financial and technical resources, the positive perception on automation, the disregard of the controlling power of AI over information flow and the criticism against the capitalist design of AI technologies.

Findings and discussion

Journalists' perception of AI

Only three out of 29 participants opposed the adaptation of AI technologies into journalism. These interviewees who are all journalists stated that they have never used AI in the news production process and disagreed with its integration into journalism. "I do not think it is ethical to let a non-journalist being do the job," and "I do not wish to see myself or my colleagues lose their job," were two notable statements expressed by those interviewees. The remaining interviewees shared a positive approach towards the integration of AI despite their concerns. Besides, majority of the interviewees argued that the work of a journalist cannot be replaced with any technological innovation. Yet, they agree on the inevitability in the transformation of journalism led by AI-driven paradigm shift.

Precarity and fear of unemployment were common concerns of the interviewees whether they agree or disagree with AI incorporation into the journalistic practices. In contrast to the opposing

group, the interviewees who share a positive approach have a limited experience with AI systems and are open to explore the opportunities AI has to offer in spite of their concerns. AI technologies are yet to be adopted to a wide extent in the newsroom, however the interviewees expressed that they prefer to benefit from AI particularly in two areas that they struggle to afford during the news production process. One area is the production of audio-visual content and the other is voiceovers. The reason why they benefit from AI the most in those areas is to maintain their presence and increase reach on the digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube without having to bear with labor cost. Yet, this demonstrates ambivalence between journalists' concern over unemployment and their perception of AI as an opportunity to reduce the cost of employment. An expert interviewee, on the other hand, argues that AI systems will take over tasks such as reporting breaking news, weather forecast and sports match results. In that sense, decrease in employment to fulfill routine tasks is expected. However, journalists' contradictory approach towards AI is quite paradoxical.

Ambivalence in terms of feelings of ethical and economic concerns as well as eagerness to explore appears as the key approach of the interviewees regarding to the integration of AI technologies in journalism. For instance, while recognizing the efficiency in automation of routine tasks, i.e. weather reports, Interviewee 1 points out the risks against accuracy and news quality posed by AI unless properly monitored. "In my opinion, it is in an experimental phase for media," the interviewee argues (Interviewee 1, personal communication, July 17, 2024).

The indispensability of human in journalism

Subsequently, Interviewee 29 states that AI can serve as an assistant to a journalist as long as humans are in control and in charge of decision-making processes.

The news, in the end, is something we write, control and publish. But our friends here sometimes experiment with AI on producing visuals, graphics and animations. As long as a human-based control mechanism works

and the humans are the ultimate decision-makers, artificial intelligence will improve journalistic techniques. (Interviewee 29, personal communication, August 1, 2024)

Interviewee 3 also emphasizes the importance of human involvement in news production. In spite that they have not used AI yet at their organization, they discuss the ways in which they can incorporate AI technologies without causing reduction in employment. The interviewee also predicts that AI could help generate advertising income in addition to its assistance in the visual content production. Nonetheless, Interviewee 3 argues that the Covid-19 period reassured the significance of journalists and the human interaction.

Journalism is like this: You go out and trace the story. Then, you come back and knock the door. Starting from your friend that opens the door for you, you create your news story. You begin discussing about the story with another reporter, editor or you write as you discuss it with your colleagues. This is what journalism is. How will I tell AI to go out and trace the news and then come back to discuss? (Interviewee 3, personal communication, July 23, 2024)

In this respect, Interviewee 22 questions the human exclusion from the news production process in spite of the benefits of AI technologies in research, editing, translation, etc. Additionally, the interviewee argues that those who prioritize profit over news quality and abuse SEO tactics will eventually misuse AI as well.

Within this context, four interviewees particularly underlined the importance of the human element in journalism by stating that AI cannot replace journalists in terms of insight, writing style and individual perspective. Interviewee 14 was one of the participants that actively use AI for tasks such as translation, visual production and writing lifestyle content, i.e. tips for staying cool in summer. However, just like Interviewee 3, Interviewee 14 stresses that it is not possible to replace a journalist since a machine cannot report from conflict zones. That's why, the interviewee disagrees with the concerns over unemployment. They recognize that the need to employ multiple editors might decrease, but argue that new technologies will create different work areas. "I certainly think that journalists must benefit from artificial intelligence.

Journalism is not a profession that will ever die," the interviewee marked (Interviewee 14, personal communication, August 21, 2024). In line with these interviewees' perspectives, Interviewee 29 also draws attention to journalists' need to adapt early to innovation in order to successfully preserve the value of journalistic work during this paradigm shift, which confirms the emphasis made by Broussard et al. (2019) for the significance of preparation and early adoption to new technologies.

The lack of resources as a challenge

It is observed that the interviewees acknowledge the intrusion of AI and its inevitable integration into their professional life. Therefore, improving their digital skills to adopt new technologies appear as some of the key challenges. Interviewee 28 was the only interviewee stating that they participated in a few AI training sessions in order to learn how to create AI-assisted visual content and generate voiceovers. Yet, during the trainings the interviewee observed the reluctance of their colleagues towards AI technologies.

When I first started my job here, I told my colleagues that 2023-2024 is said to be the year of artificial intelligence and we need to adapt ourselves in advance. The team is not very enthusiastic. We did a couple of trainings, but they should practice with it on their own time as well. (Interviewee 28, personal communication, August 8, 2024)

Lack of financial resources to integrate AI technologies is another critical challenge for independent digital news media. Two interviewees mentioned that they lack financial resources to meet new technological demands. For instance, Interviewee 27 mentions that they occasionally benefit from AI for image creation, generating subtitles and voiceover, however they have not been able to use AI for assistance in the news production due to the economic inadequacies. The interviewee shared an anecdote about how one of his friends make use of AI technologies.

They said that they built a system based on AI. It scans the most important websites in 48 countries, pulls the breaking news from them, translates to Turkish, tags and publishes them on their own website. Obviously,

this is doable. However, you need a certain capacity for that. That friend works in the finance business and has a software programmer at their organization. When these two things come together in media, a new dimension emerges. But we cannot afford it. (Interviewee 27, personal communication, August 14, 2024)

The interviewee's statement above demonstrates how financial capacity becomes a decisive factor in the adoption of AI technologies. As Simon (2022) highlights, this financial asymmetry not only leads to an increasing dependency of small-scale independent news outlets on digital platforms, but creates an information ecosystem where independence and autonomy have to be bought.

Automation as a cure to commodification of journalism

On the other hand, current state of journalism is alarming even without AI interference due to its quantity-based structure and click-based revenue model. Within this context, Interviewee 4 perceives AI technologies as an encouraging factor for quality news production and rejects the argument of precarity caused by AI. According to their view, simple visual design and copy-paste news writing do not suit to the standards of quality journalism. Unlike Diakopoulos's (2023) prediction about AI's capacity to increase commodification of journalism, the interviewee argues that automation of these tasks could serve to be a wake-up call for journalists.

It will affect my salary through indirect factors. There are so many editors in our field to have been hired to copy and paste. So, these people are not paid enough and they are pulling the media industry down. I am a university-graduate, so I neither want to copy-paste nor work for that salary. Really, some things need to change and it will not change with personal resistance. Then, what will happen? We will wait for a technological breakthrough. Therefore, I perceive this automation process of copy-pasting and simple visual production in a positive way. It will turn journalism back into its former long-form style in the digital age. (Interviewee 4, personal communication, September 10, 2024)

In addition, not having to publish tens of stories on a daily basis will provide more time to produce

quality, long-form, investigative content and increase the worth of journalists, according to the interviewee. In Perrault, et al. (2019)'s words automation might open a window for epistemic opportunities to reassure the journalists' authority and contribute to the quality news production.

How can a journalist publish 55 news stories per day? The media boss says 'isn't it what we are doing? You copy and paste eventually. I will pay you a little more than minimum wage.' This is their mindset. They must have forgotten what journalism is. This leads to the industry further down. It will be worse unless automation comes in. (Interviewee 4, personal communication, September 10, 2024)

Interviewee 6 shares a similar approach with Interviewee 4 and argues that the unemployment threat caused by AI will motivate journalists to improve their skills and expertise areas. Within this context, instead of creating human-robot journalists, having machines do the job will increase the worth of journalism itself. As journalists become unique experts difficult to be replaced by machines, journalism will reach higher and stronger quality in the long term.

The blind spot: AI as a controller of the news distribution process

While focusing on AI's capabilities in terms of efficiency in the production, most majority of the interviewees disregard the impact of AI technologies in the news distribution process, i.e. content filtering. Since they stated that they have not experienced any censorship attempts practiced by AI technologies – they often separate algorithmic bias and AI systems from each other – they tend to overlook AI's capacity to control information flow. The disregard of the information control capacity of AI through third parties, as Simon (2024) highlights, emerges as the blind spot in Türkiye's news media ecosystem. Only one interviewee, who is an expert on technology and digital platforms, pointed out the power relations deepened by AI. Interviewee 10 argued that AI serves as an instrument to strengthen the existing power structure, which necessitates a critical analysis of the attention economy driven by the digital platforms.

What is the problem with the platforms? It is that they are built on a business model that relies on the attention economy. Everyone will look at them, thus everyone will buy ad space from them. That is how they earn advertising revenue. The business model of AI is to capture the jobs. It creates automation. Thus, the more strategic news organizations will integrate AI technologies in a better way and get ahead of the others. The powerful ones will continue to become more powerful. Journalism will come to a place where the need for human will be decreased immensely since the clickbait journalism has already diminished the quality of journalism and paved the way for automation. (Interviewee 10, personal communication, July 30, 2024)

In a way, Interviewee 10 indicates the death of journalism as a result of automation. In response to the question of whether AI will increase the quality of journalism, the interviewee replied that there is no such thing as quality journalism – only high-quality interface. Traditional values of journalism does not have a place in this new paradigm. The interviewee underscores that AI capabilities extend beyond content production to practices of microtargeted news display such as creation of customized and personalized interfaces of the same website for each user. For instance, each reader of the New York Times will have a different New York Times experience tailored to their interests in near future. Therefore, automation of news production and distribution will decline the significance of journalism. Instead, long-form cultural products, will replace traditional journalism such as magazines and books. Even though, their predictions sound rigorous, the main theme of Interviewee 10's arguments align with the other interviewees' positive approach towards the transformation of journalism that will lead to an increase in value driven by automation. Also, it should be noted that the digital platforms have already been customizing content for each user and prioritizing the profit over a healthy information environment as reported in the Freedom on the Net 2023 report.

Interviewee 12, though, does not perceive customization enabled by AI systems as a threat for the future of journalism. The interviewee's news organization has fully embraced AI technologies in the production and distribution processes since

their foundation. They use AI to create microtargeted email news bulletins, collect user data and create personalized content. Similar to other interviewees, the interviewee stresses the importance of early adoption to innovation. Therefore, only those who resist the change are under threat by new technologies. According to Interviewee 12, in the age of AI three factors must be considered when starting a digital news initiative: a solid business strategy, value assessment of the organization for the media industry and measurement of the market volume. These factors determine whether AI is an opportunity or a threat for the news organization.

Most journalists in Türkiye are robot journalists. They copy and paste reports coming from the news agencies. In this system, of course, AI is a threat. In this system it is not journalism. What is done is something relied on programmatic advertising and quantitative production. This is the consequence of the save-the-day mentality. (Interviewee 12, personal communication, October 4, 2024)

In spite that Interviewee 12's organization uses AI for microtargeting and customization of content, their approach misses the role of other AI systems beyond their control. They still benefit from the distribution power of digital platforms and search engines fuelled by AI. Therefore, the impact of AI in information flow currently lacks the attention needed in Türkiye's news media.

Capitalist ideology, AI and media freedom

Throughout the interviews, under different themes, many interviewees emphasized the structural power relations situated in AI technologies and they implicitly emphasize the importance of knowledge production over information production that hinders journalism from fulfilling its public-good duty. Unless this way of doing journalism changes, independent digital news media will have to yield to the forces of the capitalist market structure, which jeopardizes media freedom and pluralism. As Interviewee 19 stressed that the hegemonic ideology is embedded within the design and structure of AI, Interviewee 20 also underlined the reality that the majority of today's AI systems are produced by a group of privileged white

Americans in the Silicon Valley that reflect their narrow view about the world. The interviewees' concern align with critical political economy scholars who argue that AI systems are concentrated in a handful of corporations whose business models prioritize the capitalist accumulation strategies rather than public interest (Fuchs, 2020; Zuboff, 2019; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). As mentioned above, Interviewee 10's argument highlights how AI reinforces attention economy by optimizing content personalization, which is profit driven and under the dominance of powerful actors in the information ecosystem. However, these interviewees do not reject the use of AI in journalism. Noting the negative impact of automation, these interviewees suggest that investigative journalism will flourish even further. "When you devalue something and destroy it, sometimes it causes a purge," argues Interviewee 20 (personal communication, August 22, 2024). Thus, majority of the interviewees continued to express a paradoxical approach throughout the interviews. As they argue that the prioritization of profit due to the capitalist market structure of news media will likely bring the end of journalism in the face of AI systems, they also seek opportunities offered by the same AI systems that could enforce the thriving of long-form and investigative journalism, which what makes journalism irreplaceable.

Yet, from a political economic perspective, the findings demonstrate that AI not only deepens the existing inequalities that the small-scale independent news media face in their relations with the global technology companies, but also reproduces the hegemonic ideology of those who control its infrastructure. Unless the regulatory frameworks of states and international bodies address the capital concentration in terms of antitrust measures, the need for public investment in alternative infrastructures or funding mechanisms that ensure the viability of independent media, journalism will likely to remain subordinate to the ideological and economic hegemony of existing AI providers.

Conclusive remarks

Journalists facing the inevitability of AI seek ways to benefit from its opportunities without being re-

placed by it. The most significant finding of the research is the paradox the interviewees are in regarding their relationship with AI technologies. Although precarity and loss of control over their profession appear as two major concerns, automation of routine journalistic tasks is perceived as a catalyst to restore journalism back to its public-good duty by reinstating the importance of investigative and long-form journalism. Therefore, AI emerges as both a threatening and redemptive actor for the news media.

Early adoption to AI technologies is critical for journalists to maintain their authority over their profession. However, lack of economic resources and technical skills are key challenges in particular for small-scale independent digital news media in Türkiye. With the limited resources at their disposal, they use AI technologies in the news production process for tasks such as audio-visual content production, voiceovers and subtitles. Thus, they desire to utilize AI as an assistant that saves time. Yet, ethical concerns regarding accuracy, as well as the idea of assigning labor to a machine, contribute to the ambivalence expressed by the interviewees. For this reason, preserving human authority over the decision-making process appears as a critical condition for AI integration into journalism.

Beyond these challenges, the findings also show that AI technologies are embedded in the already-existing capitalist and ideological structures. As interviewees pointed out, AI systems reflects the values of their corporate creators while their implementation reinforces the prioritization of the profit-driven attention economy. In that sense, AI not only transforms news production, but also expands the dominance of capitalism over journalism and increase the structural asymmetries between independent news media and global technology corporations.

The blind spot of the findings emerges as the interviewees' disregard on AI's decision-making power over news distribution. Journalists' own disinterest further risks media freedom and pluralism considering the capitalist market structure of information and communication technologies. Considering the financial struggles of the independent digital news media, the current market

structure forces journalists to produce news in line with the strategies of the actors in the information distribution process such as digital platforms and AI systems, which ultimately harms media freedom due to the prioritization of the profit-driven news production to generate revenue. Therefore, political and economic policy interventions that target the market concentration in the information ecosystem such as antitrust regulations, public funding for technological infrastructure and also independent media emerge as crucial steps for regulatory bodies to take in order to counteract the hegemonic political and economic ideologies inscribed in AI. In addition, raising awareness of media professionals about the structural problems embedded within AI systems is crucial to sustain pluralism and freedom in media. As a result, journalists' control in the production and distribution processes will make them irreplaceable.

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Funding: *No funding was received for conducting this study.*

Conflicts of Interest: *The author declares no conflict of interest.*

Ethical Approval: *The study involved semi-structured interviews with 29 participants. Data were collected on a voluntary basis, and confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. If required, details of ethical approval can be provided by the author.*

Informed Consent: *Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews.*

Data Availability: *The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to privacy and confidentiality agreements but are available from the author on reasonable request.*

AI Disclosure: *No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the preparation of this study. All content of the study was produced by the author in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical principles.*

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