MS Research Thesis

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN PAKISTAN

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INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES IN PAKISTAN

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بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمٰنِ الرَّحِيم

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

DEDICATION

This thesis is wholeheartedly dedicated to my dear parents, whose endless love, heartfelt prayers, and steadfast support have been my greatest source of strength and perseverance throughout this academic endeavor. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my sister, whose thoughtful advice and emotional presence provided comfort during the most challenging times. I am equally thankful to my friends, whose genuine encouragement, constant motivation, and shared moments of joy helped me stay focused and made this experience truly enriching.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis, neither as a whole nor as a part thereof, has been copied out from any source.It is further declared that I have prepared this thesis entirely on the basis of my personal effort made under the sincere guidance of my supervisor.No portion of work, presented in this thesis has been submitted in support of any application for any degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.

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APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE

THESIS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

It is certified that we have read this thesis submitted by Tayyaba Jabeen. It is our judgment that this is a sufficient standard to warrant acceptance by International Islamic University, Islamabad for MS in Media and Communication Studies.

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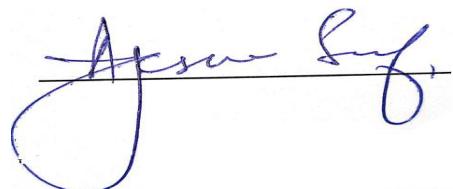
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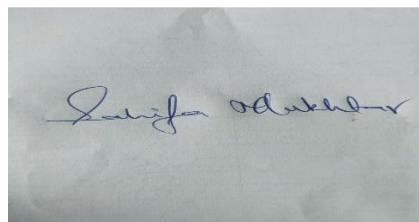
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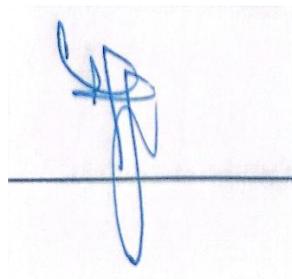
The thesis entitled "Investigative Journalism on Social Media: Prospects and Challenges in Pakistan. ", submitted by Ms. Tayyaba Jabeen has partial fulfillment of MS degree in Media and Communication Studies, has completed under my guidance and supervision. The changes advised by the external and the internal examiners hava also been incorporated. I am satisfied with the quality of student's research work and allow her to submit this thesis for further process as per IIU rules & regulations.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the potential and difficulties of social media's changing role in Pakistani investigative journalism. Based on the Technological Affordance Theory framework, the study investigates how digital platforms are revolutionising investigative reporting by providing new means of gathering data, connecting with audiences, and revealing misconduct. However, it also draws attention to the dangers of these platforms, such as false information, online harassment, digital surveillance, and legal restrictions. Relevant items from earlier academic studies were modified and adapted to fit the local context in order to create a structured questionnaire. A pilot study was carried out to confirm the validity, reliability, and clarity of the research instrument before data collection. Data were then gathered from 125 investigative journalists throughout Pakistan using a quantitative methodology. In order to investigate social media usage trends, perceived opportunities, and difficulties in the field, the study used descriptive statistics. According to the research, social media improves investigative journalism by expanding its audience and raising public interest, but it also adds ethical and professional challenges. To combat the threats posed by the digital environment, journalists emphasised the critical need for institutional support, training in digital security, and unambiguous regulatory policies. The study adds to the body of knowledge by placing social media use in investigative journalism within Pakistan's distinct media ecosystem. It also provides useful advice for policymakers, educators, and media organisations. Recommendations for improving the practice through teamwork and future research directions are included at the end.

Keywords: Investigative journalism, social media, technological affordances, Pakistan media ecosystem, digital journalism innovation, prospects, key challenges, emerging trends, Journalistic practices in Pakistan

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter introduces the study by discussing the background, significance, and current trends in investigative journalism on social media in Pakistan. It highlights the research gaps, outlines the problem statement, objectives, and research questions, and presents the conceptual framework. The chapter also defines key terms and concludes with the study's delimitations and scope.

1.1   Background of the Study

Investigative journalism often involves careful fact-checking and analysis to present objective, impactful stories. It entails extensive research and reporting to reveal hidden truths, expose corruption, and hold power accountable. "Investigative journalism" is defined by Giachi (2018) as meticulous reporting that reveals hidden facts, reveals corruption, holds influential institutions accountable, and sheds light on significant social issues. Giachi is credited with creating "investigative journalism." Finding hidden information requires a lot of investigation, fact-checking, and digging. This frequently occurs. Applying these concepts to the digital realm in order to examine the opportunities and difficulties of this expanding industry is referred to in this study as "investigative journalism in new media."The move has altered investigative journalism in new media outlets.

Digital platforms and technology that transform communication, allow for instant information sharing, encourage citizen journalism, and challenge established media models with interactive and participatory content are all included in the category of new media. The digital age presents both opportunities and challenges for investigative journalism. This is significant because sector potential has increased exponentially in this century. It is among the most powerful features of contemporary media because of its unparalleled accessibility and worldwide reach. This is not like anything else. According to Konow-Lund and Høiby's (2023) research, investigative stories have the potential to reach audiences worldwide and cut across national boundaries. Simply click a mouse icon. Transferring information globally could shed light on important issues that were previously localised. It looks likely.

New storytelling tools are another advantage of modern media. According to Dunham (2019), investigative journalists can use multimedia to produce captivating and dynamic stories. Using movies, infographics, interactive graphics, and immersive multimedia experiences, journalists can captivate their audience and make difficult subjects easier to understand. By bridging the gap between journalists and their readers, this interactive technique improves the effectiveness of investigative reporting and helps readers better understand current events. Investigative journalism in digital media necessitates teamwork. Giachi (2018) asserts that new media platforms facilitate communication between professionals, citizen journalists, and whistleblowers. Investigative journalists can collaborate with people around the world who share their interests, conduct public interviews, and use a variety of sources. Collaborating enhances the effectiveness of investigations and fosters accountability and transparency. The study may examine multiple different viewpoints simultaneously because it integrates them.

Data journalism was also made possible by the digital age. Large datasets are gathered, examined, and visualised as part of data journalism in order to find patterns, trends, and insights. Empirical evidence and interactive graphics are used to enhance storytelling and give journalists the ability to tell stories with context and engage audiences with difficult subjects. Investigative journalists may use a variety of resources because of the wealth of information available online. Through data analysis, they uncover novel trends, patterns, and anomalies. This data-driven approach lends credibility to investigative articles, claim Morais et al. (2022). This statement is supported by facts in most cases. Additionally, it permits thorough investigations that reveal corruption, inefficiency, and misconduct, which can lead to systemic reform. Such tests are made possible by this.

Investigative journalism in new media faces many challenges, despite these alluring opportunities. The spread of false information and fake news is one of our main issues. According to Webb et al. (2016), the democratisation of knowledge brought about by new media platforms has increased the likelihood of misinformation spreading. False information can damage investigative journalists' work and undermine public confidence in the media, so they must constantly combat it. Another crucial issue is how to maintain financial stability. Investigative journalism demands a lot of resources. This includes time, effort, and, due to specific circumstances, sometimes high travel and research costs.

Medina-Laverón, Sánchez-Tabernero, and Breiner (2021) assert that the financial structures of journalism have been disrupted by the digital revolution.The digital era is to blame for this. Subscription models find it difficult to cover the expenses of in-depth research, and advertising revenue has decreased. This is the reason why things are the way they are. News organisations may steer clear of investigative reporting because of this financial barrier. The quantity and calibre of critical journalism may decline as a result.

Another well-known issue with digital technology is its ethical difficulty. Digital technology is a broad category of tools and systems that use electronic devices and networks to generate, store, process, and distribute information. It is revolutionising how people interact with content, obtain news, and engage with their surroundings. On the internet, partisanship and sensationalism can occasionally override objective reporting. To address these moral dilemmas, we will follow these steps: Integrity is a crucial requirement for investigative journalists. Finding a balance between attention-grabbing headlines and reporting can be challenging, so Balaji (2019) suggests using a tightrope dance or other technique.

In conclusion, the legal and security challenges that investigative journalists face have gotten worse as a result of digital technology. In recent years, these issues have increased in frequency. When vital interests—whether they be corrupt individuals, businesses, or governments—are exposed, there may be legal and security risks. Regardless of the stated interests, this is applicable. The prevalence of hacking and cyber attacks presents a threat that truth-seeking journalists cannot ignore. It is impossible for anyone to ignore this threat. The digital age demands protection for investigative journalists Posetti, J., & Bontcheva, K. (2020).

According to Hermida, A. (2013), the emergence of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has given reporters new ways to interact with audiences and find information.Investigative journalists can quickly share their findings, track trends, and crowd source information using social media. But it also leaves them vulnerable to targeted attacks, trolling, and harassment from people who want to stop their work. Investigative journalists now face the additional challenge of maintaining digital security and managing their online presence.

Furthermore, new opportunities for investigative reporting have been made possible by the development of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism. Journalists can use AI-powered tools to analyse large volumes of data, spot trends, and even automate some tasks claims Diakopoulos, N. (2019). But relying too much on AI also brings up moral concerns about bias, openness, and the possible loss of narrative humanity.Multimedia storytelling has also become more important as a result of the move to digital platforms. Investigative reports now use interactive graphics, podcasts, and videos in addition to text to reach audiences in new ways. By making investigative work more approachable and captivating, this multimedia approach increases its impact Bradshaw, P., & Rohumaa, L. (2017).

It is impossible to exaggerate the influence investigative journalism has on public policy. Investigative journalists are essential to the upholding of democratic institutions because they expose human rights abuses, expose corruption, and hold governments responsible Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, T. L. (1998). However, they are also at risk because of this role, especially in nations where press freedom is restricted. Investigative journalism's future depends on capacity building and training. Future journalists need to know how to use sophisticated investigative tools, follow ethical standards, and be digitally literate. Media companies and educational institutions need to work together to offer continuing mentorship and training opportunities Graves, L., & Konieczna, M. (2015).

Carlson, M. (2020) asserts there are both tremendous opportunities and difficult challenges for investigative journalism in the digital age. Digital platforms present risks like false information, unstable finances, and security threats, even though they also provide new ways to reach audiences and tell stories.Investigative journalists need to adjust to these developments by utilising new technologies while maintaining the values of truthfulness, honesty, and public service.

1.2   Research Gaps

Though research on investigative journalism in Pakistan is expanding, the majority of it concentrates on traditional media outlets and their institutional, political, and structural constraints (Nazir & Gillani, 2024). Issues including censorship, a lack of editorial independence, inadequate safety measures, and institutional pressures are

frequently highlighted in these studies. However, they frequently fail to recognise the growing significance of digital media, especially social media, in transforming the field of investigative reporting Skjerdal, T. S. (2010).Even though Pakistani journalists now rely heavily on social media platforms, interact with viewers, and get around established gatekeeping systems, the intricate relationship between social media platforms and investigative journalism is still not fully understood. An obvious gap in current scholarship is the lack of attention paid to social media as a transformative medium Ahmad, T., & Sheikh, A. M. (2021).

In addition, Shah, A., & Yousaf, S. (2022) claims , there is a dearth of research on the new opportunities and problems that investigative journalists face when working on social media platforms in Pakistan, including digital surveillance, online harassment, disinformation, and changing legal ambiguities. Despite the fact that social media can both support and undermine journalistic integrity, according to international studies (Posetti et al., 2019; Bradshaw & Howard, 2018), these conclusions are not contextualised to the particular sociopolitical realities of Pakistan.

Cheema, A., & Akram, S. (2021) suggests that it is necessary to comprehend how investigative journalists in Pakistan view and handle these digital opportunities and challenges. By investigating the perceived opportunities, difficulties, and prospects for using social media for investigative journalism in Pakistan, this study aims to close this scholarly gap. In the digital age, this will have practical ramifications for journalists, media outlets, and policymakers in addition to adding to the body of knowledge in academia.

1.3   Problem Statement

In the context of new media, this study is looking at the opportunities and difficulties of investigative journalism. The rise of digital platforms has had a big impact on investigative journalism, and this study intends to look into how these developments are affecting the nature, impact, and sustainability of investigative reporting. While addressing the difficulties, such as false information, long-term financial viability, moral quandaries, and security threats, the study will also examine the advantages of new media, such as its worldwide reach, multimedia storytelling, and cooperative methods. The study aims to shed light on these dynamics in order to explain

how investigative journalism is changing in the digital era and how it contributes to accountability and transparency.

The shift to digital platforms offers investigative journalists in Pakistan, where journalistic practices are impacted by political pressures, regulatory restrictions, and changing media consumption patterns, both special opportunities and increased risks. The goal of this study is to determine how social media is being used for audience engagement and threat exposure in addition to reporting. This study attempts to close the knowledge gap on how new media technologies are changing investigative journalism in contexts where press freedom and digital literacy are changing by concentrating on the lived experiences and perspectives of investigative journalists.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the frequency and primary purposes of social media usage in investigative journalism among journalists in Pakistan.

2. To examine the perceptions of investigative journalists regarding the effectiveness of social media in raising public awareness on various issues in Pakistan.

3. To explore the challenges and opportunities presented by social media for investigative journalism in Pakistan.

1.5 Research Questions

RQ.1 What frequency and purposes define the use of social media by investigative journalists in Pakistan?

RQ.2 To what extent do investigative journalists perceive social media as a tool for raising public awareness and engagement on various issues in Pakistan?

RQ.3 What are the main challenges and prospects faced by investigative journalists in Pakistan when using social media for investigative reporting?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it has the potential to clarify the vital function

that investigative journalism plays in the digital era. Understanding how journalism is adjusting to the evolving information ecosystem requires examining the opportunities and difficulties faced by investigative journalists in new media (Singer, 2014; Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2017). The results of this study can help journalists, news organisations, and legislators understand how journalism is changing and develop better plans for maintaining high-caliber investigative reporting (Carlson, 2015). This research also helps to protect journalism's integrity, which is essential for maintaining democratic values and guaranteeing educated public discourse, by tackling problems like disinformation and moral quandaries (Ward, 2010).

In Pakistan, where journalists frequently work in constrictive settings with little legal protection, unstable finances, and growing online threats, this study is especially important (Nazir & Gillani, 2021; RSF, 20%3). This study, which focusses on how investigative journalists use social media, provides relevant insights into how digital tools are being used to both facilitate impactful journalism and create new challenges (Posetti et al., 2020). The findings of the study could help educators, media professionals, and designers of digital platforms comprehend how real-world affordances and limitations influence journalistic practices.The ultimate goal of this research is to assist initiatives aimed at improving ethical standards, digital literacy, and press freedom both inside and outside of Pakistan's investigative journalism community.

1.7   Theoretical Significance

This study's theoretical significance stems from its application of the Technological Affordance Theory to the social media context of investigative journalism. Using this framework, the study investigates how digital platforms in Pakistan both facilitate and limit the work of investigative journalists. In addition to exposing journalists to problems like surveillance, disinformation, algorithmic bias, and harassment, this theory offers a structured lens through which to view how journalists interact with the technological environments in which they work. It emphasises how features like immediacy, interactivity, and networked communication open up new avenues for information gathering, audience engagement, and storytelling.

Furthermore, by showing how structural, cultural, and legal limitations mediate the relationship between journalists and technology, the study broadens the application of

affordance theory. In doing so, it reframes the theory to better fit digital contexts where freedom of expression is contested, such as hybrid or restricted ones (Velasquez & Rojas, 2017; Davis & Chouinard, 2017). Through empirical data, this study demonstrates how affordances like visibility, interactivity, and persistence are viewed as both potential vulnerabilities and tools for journalistic expression, providing a more nuanced understanding of the risks and benefits of digital journalism in transitional democracies like Pakistan (Bossetta, 2018; Lewis & Molyneux, 2018; Tandoc & Maitra, 2018).

1.8   Practical Significance

The potential for this study to offer useful insights for policymakers, media organisations, investigative journalists, and digital platform designers navigating Pakistan's changing media landscape is what gives it practical significance. This study emphasises how social media platforms both facilitate and impede the pursuit of investigative journalism, as the practice of journalism continues to change around the world (Broersma & Graham, 2013; Newman et al., 2023). Investigative journalists in Pakistan can improve their digital literacy, audience engagement, and ethical content production by using social media's technological affordances, such as speed, interactivity, and global reach (Chadwick, 2017; Tandoc & Maitra, 2018).

In a media landscape characterised by financial limitations, regulatory obstacles, and the increasing danger of disinformation (Nazir & Gillani, 2021; Freedom Network, 2023), the results of this study can assist newsrooms and independent journalists in implementing more robust digital tactics. It highlights the need for specialised training courses that give investigative journalists the know-how to use social media in an ethical manner for source verification, fact-checking, and safe communication (Graves, 2018; Hermida, 2020).

According to Carlson and Lewis (2020), the study also urges media companies to create institutional support systems that tackle digital threats, improve professional autonomy, and encourage sustainable investigative methods.This study can also help shape policy frameworks that safeguard press freedom and promote responsible digital journalism in Pakistan's distinct socio-political context by providing a grounded understanding of the realities faced by journalists on digital platforms (UNESCO, 2022; RSF, 2024).

1.9   Contextual Significance

In light of Pakistan's sociopolitical and cultural background, this study emphasises how important it is to look into how social media can be used for investigative journalism in a limited media landscape. Although Western liberal democracies have produced a large portion of the research on digital journalism, Pakistan offers a unique context characterised by digital surveillance, political pressures, and media restrictions (Rehman, 2017; Yusuf, 2022). This study fills that knowledge gap by evaluating the relevance and applicability of international theoretical frameworks—like Technological Affordance Theory—in Pakistan's ever-changing digital media environment.

Pakistani journalists are using social media more and more to conduct research, publish, and interact with the public as a result of growing internet access and the pervasive usage of sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These benefits do come with risks, though, like misinformation, censorship, and online harassment. In addition to expanding the conversation on how journalists in hybrid regimes traverse complex digital terrains, this study addresses calls for context-sensitive research by gathering data exclusively from investigative journalists in Pakistan (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018; Shabbir & Yasin, 2020).

1.10   Delimitations of the Study

The scope of this study is restricted to analysing the opportunities and difficulties of social media investigative journalism in the particular sociopolitical and cultural context of Pakistan. Only investigative journalists who were active on digital platforms provided the data. Comparisons between employed and freelance journalists, as well as with international practices, are not included in the study. Additionally, it doesn't highlight any particular social media network. The Technological Affordance Theory is only applied in the Pakistani national context to represent the unique circumstances that investigative journalists encounter.

The chapter talked about the research gaps, significance of the study, research questions, research objectives, the theoretical, contextual, and practical significance of the study, the operationalization of the constructs, the delimitations of the study to give a basic understanding of the study's theme.

CHAPTER-2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter has discussed the relevant literature. A comprehensive examination of the research variables up till now developing sync between different studies that have been utilized and the critical review that form the foundations of the current study is presented in this chapter.Multiple themes of the literature have been explored to ensure that past studies have been completely reviewed and included.

2.1 The Evolution of Investigative Journalism in the Age of Social Media: A Literature Review

Since it reveals hidden facts and holds leaders accountable, investigative journalism has long been seen as a crucial component of democracy. Public education and transparency are greatly aided by this kind of journalism, which is frequently distinguished by thorough investigation, thorough fact-checking, and the exposure of systemic problems. Investigative journalism is, nevertheless, undergoing tremendous change as a result of the emergence of new media, which presents both possibilities and difficulties. Although the field has undergone a revolution with the rise of digital platforms, citizen journalism, data-driven reporting, and multimedia storytelling, significant challenges still exist due to factors like fake news, financial limitations, moral quandaries, and safety concerns. This review of the literature looks at how investigative journalism is changing in the digital age, examining the advantages and disadvantages of technological advancements.

2.1.1 The Global Reach of Investigative Journalism Through Social Media

The capacity of digital media to link audiences globally is among its most important benefits. Once dependent on print media and traditional broadcast networks, investigative journalism has now spread beyond national borders. According to Franklin (2014), digital technologies have made journalism more global by allowing news stories to be instantly shared across national boundaries.Investigative journalists can now raise awareness of important issues on a scale that was previously impossible thanks to this connectivity. Digital media also encourages audiences to interact with journalists in real time, which makes journalism a more participatory and interactive process. Investigative

reporting now primarily uses new media platforms, such as blogs, social media, and independent news websites. By avoiding conventional gatekeepers, these platforms give journalists direct avenues to disseminate their research

According to Thorsen (2020), citizen journalism plays a significant role in investigative reporting, highlighting the ways in which people can participate in the news-gathering process through digital tools. The credibility and breadth of investigative journalism are increased by citizen journalists' ability to record events, offer eyewitness accounts, and reveal corruption via social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.While digital media broadens the audience for investigative journalism, it also makes thorough fact-checking necessary to counter false information.

2.1.2 Multimedia Storytelling and Audience Engagement

The presentation and consumption of investigative stories have changed as a result of the incorporation of multimedia components. Long text-based reports were a commonstay of traditional investigative journalism, but new storytelling formats brought about by digital advancements have made difficult subjects more approachable and interesting.According to Gamble (2016), using data visualizations, interactive graphics, infographics, and videos improves reader comprehension and engagement. In addition to grabbing the audience's interest, these multimedia components make it easier to present complex research findings in an approachable way.

Investigative reports on political scandals, corporate fraud, or environmental crises, for example, can now incorporate interactive maps, video interviews, and documentary-style storytelling to create a more engaging experience. Additionally, investigative journalists can experiment with narrative structures through digital platforms, bringing their stories to life with techniques like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). By reaching a larger audience and evoking more powerful emotional reactions, this storytelling innovation could eventually promote increased public awareness and accountability.

2.1.3 Collaborative Journalism and Crowd sourcing

Investigative journalism has entered a new era of cooperation thanks to the digital age. In contrast to traditional journalism, which frequently depended on lone reporters or

small editorial teams, modern investigative journalism gains from cooperative networks that combine resources, knowledge, and data analysis skills.Thorsen (2020) emphasizes the value of crowd sourcing in investigative journalism, where reporters interact with the public to unearth untold tales. Investigative journalists can obtain information from a variety of sources, such as citizens, subject-matter experts, and whistle blowers, thanks to crowd sourcing projects.

Examples of collaborative journalism include the Panama Papers, where more than 100 media outlets from all over the world worked together to reveal offshore tax evasion. These extensive investigations show how teamwork expands the reach and influence of investigative journalism, made possible by digital platforms and encrypted communication channels.Additionally, digital tools are used by investigative journalism collectives like the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) to organize cross-border investigations, guaranteeing that important stories are seen by people around the world.

2.1.4   The Rise of Data Journalism

In the digital age, data journalism has become an essential part of investigative reporting. Large digital datasets are now available to investigative journalists, which can uncover hidden trends, patterns, and systemic problems. Data-driven reporting is covered in great detail by Parasie (2015), who highlights how data analysis raises the caliber and scope of investigative journalism. Journalists can find anomalies in financial transactions, political donations, environmental violations, and other crucial areas by using sophisticated data-mining techniques.

For example, journalism can now analyze large datasets in previously unattainable ways thanks to the application of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. Data-driven storytelling has been incorporated into investigative reporting by news outlets like Publication and The Guardian, which create interactive reports that let readers examine data in real time. Although data journalism offers valuable insights, it also necessitates that journalists have technical expertise in programming, data analysis, and statistical interpretation, which poses a new set of difficulties for conventional reporters.

2.1.5   The Challenge of Misinformation and Fake News

The spread of false information and fake news is one of the biggest problems facing investigative journalism in the digital age. False narratives have spread quickly as a result of the democratization of information through digital platforms and social media, undermining the legitimacy of traditional journalism.According to Martens et al. (2018), disinformation campaigns that are frequently planned by interest groups or state actors distort public opinion and undermine confidence in journalism.

Investigative journalism is threatened by fake news, which also presents difficulties for reporters who try to disprove misinformation. Because manipulated images and videos can mislead viewers and distort reality, the emergence of deepfake technology makes this problem even more complicated. Investigative journalists must use stringent fact-checking techniques, work with verification organizations, and spread media literacy awareness in order to counter false information. Initiatives like Snopes and FactCheck.org are essential in spotting and disproving lies, highlighting the value of investigative journalism in preserving an informed public.

2.1.6   Financial Constraints and the Sustainability of Investigative Journalism

Digital media offers many opportunities, but funding investigative journalism is a major obstacle. The demise of conventional funding sources that formerly financed investigative projects, like newspaper subscriptions and advertising revenue, is covered by Rogers (2016).The quantity and quality of investigative journalism have decreased as a result of news organizations cutting back on their investment in this type of reporting due to financial difficulties.

Many investigative journalists and organizations have resorted to alternative funding models, such as grants, nonprofit journalism, and crowdfunding, in order to address this problem. While groups like the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting offer grants to finance in-depth investigations, platforms like Kickstarter and Patreon allow viewers to directly support investigative projects. Investigative journalists must constantly adjust in order to obtain funding, as the viability of these funding models is still questionable.

2.1.7 Ethical Dilemmas and Objectivity in Digital Journalism

The boundaries between advocacy and journalism have become more hazy due to the digital environment, which has raised moral questions regarding objectivity and bias. Investigative journalism's credibility can be damaged by sensationalism, clickbait headlines, and partisan reporting. Investigative journalists have to handle these moral dilemmas while continuing to report with objectivity, integrity, and accuracy. In addition, journalists may prioritize sensational stories over in-depth investigative work due to pressure to generate online engagement.

According to Carson and Farhall (2018), the commercialization of digital journalism has made viral content more appealing, which may jeopardize journalistic ethics. Investigative journalists must follow ethical rules, like those set forth by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), in order to maintain professional standards and make sure that their work is impartial and supported by evidence.

2.1.8 Legal and Safety Concerns for Investigative Journalists

In the digital age, investigative journalists run a serious risk to their safety and legal standing. The proliferation of digital tracking, cyber surveillance, and online harassment has made journalists more susceptible to threats from influential organizations that aim to stifle critical reporting. According to Carson and Farhall (2018), investigative journalists need to take safety measures to protect their sources, secure their communications, and protect themselves.

Investigative journalism is subject to different legal frameworks in different nations; some have harsh censorship laws and prosecute journalists who reveal corruption. Prominent cases, like the Edward Snowden revelations, highlight the moral and legal conundrums that investigative journalists dealing with delicate subjects must deal with. International groups like Reporters Without Borders (RSF) promote safety precautions and legal protections for journalists around the world in order to guarantee press freedom.

Since it exposes hidden realities and holds leaders accountable, investigative journalism has been a crucial part of democracy. However, the field has changed due to the digital age, which presents both important challenges and new opportunities. The impact, ethical issues, and function of digital media are the main topics of this literature

review, which looks at how investigative journalism is changing.

2.1.9 The Growth of Social Media and the Spread of Misinformation

Although social media has become a major source of news, it also makes it easier for false information to spread quickly. Although social media platforms are effective tools for disseminating news, Pennycook and Rand (2019) discovered that they also aid in the spread of misleading information.This emphasizes how journalists must implement stricter digital authentication procedures. Social media's rise has changed journalism by making information instantly accessible, but it has also put the conventional verification process to the test (Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

Journalism has become much more globalised thanks to new media. Franklin (2014) highlights how investigative journalism has become more accessible thanks to digital technologies that enable news to be aired globally. Multimedia components like videos, infographics, and interactive graphics are now used by investigative journalists to increase viewer engagement (Gamble, 2016). Investigative journalism is now more engaging and available to a worldwide audience thanks to these tools.

2.1.10 Data Journalism and the Role of Digital Technology

Investigative reporting now requires the use of data journalism. Parasite (2015) examined the effects of data-driven journalism, emphasising how it can use in-depth data analysis to reveal hidden stories. In order to produce more thorough and reliable investigative reports, journalists now employ databases and digital tools to examine patterns and trends (Parasie, 2015). Big data integration in journalism makes it possible to uncover malpractice and corruption in a more methodical manner.

Data journalism, according to Chaparro-Domínguez and Díaz-Campo (2023), allows reporters to glean insightful information from large datasets, uncovering stories that might otherwise go unnoticed. The ability to evaluate vast amounts of data has radically altered the way investigative journalists work, enabling them to produce more in-depth and reliable reporting.

2.1.11 Ethical and Financial Challenges in Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism has many advantages in the digital age, but it also faces

many moral and financial obstacles. Given the continued decline of traditional funding sources for investigative journalism, Moro Visconti and Morea (2019) draw attention to concerns regarding financial sustainability. There may be a drop in the calibre and volume of investigative reporting as a result of many media outlets' inability to fund in-depth projects (Rogers, 2016).

Digital media has also made it harder to distinguish between journalism and advocacy. Bias and sensationalism have the potential to undermine investigative reporting's objectivity, casting doubt on its impartiality and accuracy (Olayinka & Odunayo, 2024). In order to preserve their credibility and professional integrity, investigative journalists need to carefully handle these moral conundrums.

Investigative journalism is made more difficult by the problem of disinformation. Although the digital era has made information more accessible, it has also made it possible for false narratives to proliferate quickly. According to Martens et al. (2018), disinformation can damage investigative journalism's reputation and make it harder for reporters to keep the public's trust.

2.1.12 Legal and Safety Concerns in the Digital Age

Because their work is sensitive, investigative journalists frequently face safety and legal risks. Due to the internet's constant connectivity, journalists are vulnerable to cyberattacks and possible legal action from powerful entities (Mezei & Szentgáli-Tóth, 2023). Investigative journalists' safety and security have become top priorities, especially in politically delicate settings.

An excellent illustration of the dangers and benefits of digital investigative journalism is The Guardian's coverage of the Snowden revelations. Miscione (2023) points out that this case not only showed the international scope of investigative reporting but also the security and legal difficulties that journalists encounter when working with classified material.

2.1.13 The Role of Social Media in Journalism

By enabling audience interaction and delivering real-time information, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have revolutionised journalism. But they have also questioned established journalistic conventions. According to research by Posetti (2013),

journalists are using social media more and more to obtain news, making it harder to distinguish between their personal and professional lives. Journalistic standards and verification processes have changed as a result of this change.

Canter (2015) studied Twitter's function in newsrooms and observed that, in spite of early mistrust, it has developed into a vital tool for reporters. Today, 42% of journalists rely on Twitter as their main news source, and 96% of journalists use it every day. Even though worries about false information are still common, this change highlights the increasing reliance on social media for news distribution.

2.1.14 The Changing Role of Journalists in the Digital Age

Today's journalists have to adjust to a media environment that is changing quickly. According to Gehrke and Benetti (2020), journalists today obtain information from both traditional and digital sources. Social media platforms facilitate communication between society and governments, giving journalists access to current events and public opinion. The increasing impact of citizen journalism is another issue that investigative journalists must deal with. Thorsen (2020) emphasises the function of collaborative networks and crowd sourcing in investigative journalism. These methods promote a more participatory style of journalism by enabling reporters to unearth untold tales with the public's assistance.

2.2   Theoretical Framework
2.2.1   Technological Affordance Theory

Technological affordance theory, first proposed by Gibson (1979) and then modified for the communication and media studies field by researchers such as Norman (1988), describes the options for action that a technology provides its users based on how the user interacts with its features. It highlights how people view and make use of the features built into a technology to accomplish their objectives. Certain practices and interactions are made possible by affordances like connectivity, real-time communication, multimedia sharing, and algorithmic visibility in the context of social media, which influence how users interact with these platforms.

Since it emphasises the interaction between digital platforms and journalistic practices, this theory is extremely pertinent to comprehending the dynamics of

investigative journalism on social media in Pakistan. Investigative journalists have never-before-seen opportunities to collect, validate, and share information through social media platforms.. Journalists can crowd source information, reach a larger audience, and elevate under-represented voices through features like instant sharing, global connectivity, and user interaction. These affordances do, however, come with a number of difficulties. Investigative journalists encounter obstacles like algorithmic biases, online harassment, and censorship in Pakistan, where social media serves as both a ground for free speech and a battlefield for ideological control. While legal and regulatory restrictions, such as cybercrime laws, can make it more difficult for journalists to look into delicate subjects, algorithms may favour sensational content over in-depth reporting.

Additionally, social media's anonymity frequently encourages disinformation campaigns, which makes it challenging for reporters to discern between reliable sources and untrue stories.Therefore, social media's technological affordances both enable and restrict investigative journalism, influencing its opportunities and difficulties in Pakistan.

This study's use of the Technological Affordance Theory is especially relevant to comprehending how investigative journalism adjusts to the particular affordances and limitations offered by social media platforms. This theoretical framework clarifies how investigative journalists can use digital tools to reach a wider audience, hear under-represented voices, and interact with audiences around the world (Hutchby, 2001; Norman, 1999).Meanwhile, it draws attention to the constraints imposed by platform-specific elements like digital surveillance, content algorithms, online harassment, and legal restrictions (Papacharissi, 2010; Bradshaw & Howard, 2018).Understanding these affordances is crucial in the Pakistani context, where institutional censorship, regulatory threats, and socio-political sensitivities are already putting pressure on investigative journalism. With wider ramifications for journalists working in similarly constrained or semi-authoritarian media environments, this study explores how these two forces of empowerment and constraint influence investigative reporting via social media.

Globally, there have been both opportunities and risks associated with the evolution of investigative journalism via digital and social media. Platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter (now X) have made content creation and distribution more accessible, but they have also made fact-checking more difficult, facilitated the quick spread of false information, and challenged editorial control (Posetti et al., 2019;

Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).Additionally, these platforms' algorithm-driven business models frequently put clickbait and virality ahead of in-depth research, which reduces the sustainability and visibility of long-form reporting (Napoli, 2019; Tandoc & Maitra, 2018). These issues are particularly noticeable in Pakistan, where journalists are subject to digital censorship and legal intimidation, and digital spaces are being watched more closely (Nazir & Gillani, 2024). However, there aren't many empirical studies that examine how Pakistani investigative journalists strategically manage the advantages and disadvantages of social media.

By examining how technological affordances influence investigative journalism practices in Pakistan's digital environment, this study closes a significant gap in the literature. Although previous studies have looked at the broad opportunities that digital media presents for journalism (Hermida, 2010; Deuze, 2007), there is a lack of targeted research on how these affordances specifically impact investigative journalism in emerging democracies with limited press freedom. The research provides new insights into how journalists use or resist digital tools under institutional and technological constraints by applying affordance theory in this particular context. In addition to enhancing scholarly discourse, this work offers practical recommendations for media outlets, journalists, and policy advocates operating in comparable sociopolitical contexts.

This study adds to a more sophisticated understanding of how platform architectures and digital affordances affect the ethics, autonomy, and sustainability of investigative reporting globally by tying technological affordance theory to the changing realities of social media journalism in Pakistan (Krämer, 2021). It highlights how crucial it is to look at national media ecologies in order to create more contextually sensitive tactics for assisting investigative journalism in the digital era.

CHPTER-3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach that was used for this study is outlined in the this chapter. It describes the study design, data collection methods, research setting, participants, demographic characteristics, sampling strategy, data analysis techniques, measurement instruments, and their reliability analysis.

3.1   Methodology – Study Design

A methodical approach to accurately and efficiently addressing research objectives is provided by a well-structured research design, which forms the basis for significant and legitimate results (Sekaran, 2003). A quantitative and positivist research design was chosen for the current study, which examines the opportunities and difficulties of investigative journalism on social media in Pakistan. This methodology is suitable for examining trends among predetermined variables through the use of structured instruments like surveys and statistical methods, which enable results that are impartial and repeatable (Vaus, 2001; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005).

In order to examine actual practices and gauge perceptions and trends using measurable data, the positivist paradigm is frequently used in communication and media studies (Norman, 2003). The design of this study sought to investigate and elucidate the function of social media as a crucial instrument in investigative journalism, as well as how journalists view its opportunities, difficulties, and potential in the future.Examining the relationships between these factors in the context of Pakistan's media landscape was the main goal.

Following recent methodologies in journalism and digital media studies, the study not only measured these relationships but also included an exploratory component to identify growing trends and contextual factors influencing online investigative practices (Alsaggaf & Althonayan, 2017).The study guaranteed the validity and dependability of the data gathered from qualified investigative journalists by using a systematic quantitative approach. This design made it easier to understand and supported insightful findings regarding the changing dynamics of social media use in Pakistani investigative journalism.

3.2   Research Design

According to the current study's goals, the investigation sought to find out how Pakistani investigative journalists use social media and how they view its opportunities, difficulties, and potential. The study examined the perceived advantages and disadvantages of social media use in investigative journalism, as well as its frequency and intent. A quantitative research design was used to guarantee the findings' objectivity, generalisability, and reproducibility, in keeping with earlier journalism and media studies research. A closed-ended questionnaire and other structured data collection tools were used in the study to gather information from investigative journalists working for various Pakistani media outlets. Standardised statistical techniques were used in this investigation to assess the measures' internal consistency, validity, and reliability. Using this methodology, the study sought to offer a comprehensive and fact-based understanding of how social media is changing investigative journalism in Pakistani media.

3.3   Data Collection Methods

A structured questionnaire intended to gather information about the attitudes, experiences, and social media usage of Pakistani investigative journalists was used to gather data for this study. The questionnaire was created using current research in the domains of communication, media studies, and journalism as well as established scales. The survey comprised Likert-scale items addressing four major variables: Social Media Use, Perceived Prospects, Perceived Challenges, and Future Outlook of investigative journalism on social media, in addition to demographic questions (such as gender, years of experience, and media affiliation). To gauge the degree of agreement or frequency, a 5-point Likert scale was employed, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree (and in certain situations, from 1 denoting never to 5 denoting frequently). Data was collected online using Google Forms, which made it possible to reach respondents in different parts of Pakistan more effectively and broadly. To guarantee targeted outreach, the questionnaire link was distributed via email, professional networks, and pertinent social media sites. Since they are directly involved in using social media to find and report on important issues, only investigative journalists were chosen to participate in this study. The study's goals, which are to investigate the opportunities and difficulties of investigative journalism on social media in Pakistan, were directly

addressed by the data gathered thanks to this particular focus. Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of journalists to ensure clarity, relevance, and consistency of the items. The feedback was incorporated to refine the final instrument.

3.3.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out to assess the research instrument's dependability, lucidity, and time efficiency prior to the primary data collection. 38 items made up the preliminary questionnaire, which covered all of the study's important variables, such as social media use, investigative journalism techniques, perceived opportunities and difficulties, and outlook for the future. A small sample of media professionals and investigative journalists who were comparable to the target population were given the pilot study. Eleven items were eliminated from the final questionnaire version in response to feedback and a statistical analysis of the pilot data. The instrument's overall internal consistency and efficiency were improved by eliminating these items, which were either unnecessary, ambiguous, or time-consumingThis improvement made sure the final survey stayed methodologically sound, respondent-friendly, and focused. The main study's response rate and response validity were both enhanced by the modifications made to conform to best practices in survey design.

3.4   Research Settings and Participants

Recent studies demonstrate how social media is increasingly changing journalism practices around the world. A. Hermida (2010). Digital platforms are being used more and more by investigative journalists to find, validate, and share information about social issues (Posetti & Matthews, 2018). Investigating how social media helps or hinders investigative reporting is crucial in light of this change. As a result, the current study concentrated on gathering information from investigative journalists throughout Pakistan, where digital journalism is growing quickly.Pakistan offers a pertinent context for examining the opportunities and difficulties of investigative journalism in the digital age, as many journalists use social media for research and public engagement (Nazir & Gillani, 2023; Ivwighren & Oghiagbepha, 2024).

3.5   Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was the investigative journalists who are currently employed by Pakistan's numerous media outlets. Professionals involved in investigative reporting on social, political, and economic issues were included in the study; however, they were not separated according to their media affiliation because this distinction was outside the purview of the research.

3.5.1   Population

The current study concentrated on gathering data from investigative journalists who are actively working throughout Pakistan in order to improve the findings' generalisability and in accordance with suggestions made by earlier research (Nawaz et al., 2020). Professionals directly involved in investigative journalism who work in print, electronic, and digital media were among the target population. These people find, validate, and share information about social, political, and economic issues using social media platforms. To guarantee the specificity and applicability of the information gathered, the study only included investigative journalists. This emphasis is in line with recent research that highlights how Pakistani investigative journalists are increasingly depending on social media for information gathering and distribution (Nazir & Gillani, 2023; Shah, 2021).

3.5.2   Sampling Technique

The Sampling Technique is used in research to gather data because it is impractical to collect data from the entire population. Data collection from a chosen group that is representative of the entire population is known as sampling, and selecting a representative group necessitates considerable thought and care. Purposive and snowball sampling were employed in the study because there isn't a centralised database of investigative journalists in Pakistan. The first step involved using purposive sampling to find people who specifically met the requirements for being investigative journalists who were active on social media. whereas snowball sampling enabled them to recommend additional pertinent experts. According to Etkan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), this strategy guaranteed focused data collection from a population that was difficult to reach.

3.5.3 Data Collection Instruments

Depending on the type of questions, 5-point Likert scales were used to collect the data. The scale went from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for items that were based on attitudes and perceptions. In order to ensure uniformity and clarity in measuring responses across all variables, the frequency-related items were measured using a scale that went from 1 = Never to 5 = Frequently.

3.6 Measures

The present investigation utilised a quantitative research methodology, and SPSS software was utilised for data analysis. The study's main variables, such as social media use, perceived opportunities, difficulties, and the future of investigative journalism in Pakistan, were evaluated using standardised and trustworthy measurement scales. 5-point Likert scales were used to measure every item on the scale, including frequency-based items (1 = Never to 5 = Frequently) and agreement-based items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was administered in English, as it is the primary medium of professional communication in Pakistan's media sector. Previous research confirms the adequacy of English for survey distribution among educated populations in Pakistan (Butt, Choi, & Jaeger, 2005; Khan, Abbas, Gul, & Raja, 2015; Raja et al., 2004). Since all respondents were investigative journalists with graduate-level or higher education, no translation into Urdu was required.

3.6.1 Measures Reliability and Validity

The study employed Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis to evaluate the validity and reliability of the scales used to measure the study's variables in order to guarantee the cultural relevance of the research instrument. Social media use, prospects, challenges, and future prospects were the four primary variables. From never to very frequently, and from strongly disagree to strongly agree, the research's degree ranged from 1 to 5.

All of the scales in this study had Cronbach's alpha values of 0.84, 0.85, 0.80, and 0.90, respectively. This demonstrates the dependability of every scale. A general summary view of all the scales, together with the dimensionality and polar ends of each scale, is shown in Table 1 below, which gives a clear picture of the instruments used for data collection.

Table 1: *Constructs of the study*

Variable Name	Dimensions	No. Of Items	Author	Extent	Polar Ends	Cronbach' Alpha Value
Social Media	1	4		5	Never to very frequently	0.84
Prospects	1	7	Ivwighren and Oghiagbepha (2024)	5	Strongly agree to Strongly disagree	0.85
Challenges	1	8	Ivwighren and Oghiagbepha (2024)	5	Never to very frequently	0.80
			Nazir, and Gillani (2023)		Strongly agree to Strongly disagree	0.80

3.7 Operationalization and Measurement of Social Media Variables in Investigative Journalism

Following earlier research, the current study used a 4-item scale to evaluate the frequency and purpose of social media use in investigative journalism.Social Media was measured using the following items:

1. How frequently do you use social media platforms for investigative journalism?

2. How much time do you spend on social media for investigative work each day?

3. How frequently do you use the following social media platforms for investigative reporting?

4. How frequently do you use social media platforms for the following purposes in your investigative reporting?"

The responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale with the anchors:

1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, and 5 = Very Frequently.

The Cronbach's alpha value for this variable was 0.84, indicating strong internal consistency and reliability.

3.8   Perceived Prospects of Social Media in Investigative Journalism: Operationalization and Reliability

A seven-item scale modified from Ivwighren & Oghiagbepha (2024) was used in the current study to evaluate the prospects of investigative journalism through social media. The perceived advantages and opportunities that social media offers Pakistani investigative journalists were assessed in this section. Sample items included statements such as: ·

1. Investigative journalism on social media increases public awareness.

2. Social media helps in exposing hidden issues through investigative reporting.

3. Social media improves the impact of investigative journalism.

Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale with the anchors: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The Cronbach's alpha for this variable was 0.85, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

3.9   Key Challenges of Social Media in Investigative Journalism: Operationalization and Reliability

This study used an 8-item scale to evaluate the main challenges investigative journalists encounter when utilizing social media, drawing from earlier research by Ivwighren and Oghiagbepha (2024) and Nazir and Gillani (2023). The scale included both attitudinal and frequency-based items. Example items included:

1. How frequently do you face online threats or harassment while using social media for investigative journalism?

2. The spread of misinformation and fake news on social media is a significant challenge to investigative journalism in Pakistan.

3. Maintaining ethical standards on social media is challenging for investigative journalists in Pakistan.

4. A lack of digital literacy and training among investigative journalists hinders effective use of social media in Pakistan.

The responses were gathered using two Likert-type scales:

- A 5-point frequency scale ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Very Frequently for items addressing the regularity of challenges.

- A 5-point agreement scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree for attitudinal responses.

The Cronbach's alpha value for this variable was 0.80, indicating acceptable reliability and internal consistency.

3.10   Data Analysis Techniques

In order to make the primary data relevant, comprehensible and presentable.The statistical methods such as SPSS were used in the analysis.

- Following the sorting and coding of the questionnaires, the data were entered into the SPSS database program.

- Missing and errors in data were treated.

- The frequencies were examined in order to locate missing data and outliers.

- Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the variables under investigation. The averages of the different variables were determined.

CHAPTER-4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the investigation are presented here in the current chapter.The study's results include the study's sample size and demographic information, as well as descriptive statistics.

4.1 Sample Size and Demographics Characteristics

The study's data came from a purposive and snowball sample of 125 investigative journalists from all over Pakistan who completed self-administered survey questionnaires. The 125 investigative journalists chosen as the sample size are in line with generally recognized research guidelines for quantitative studies, which state that in order to guarantee statistically significant findings, there should be at least 100–150 participants (Hair et al., 2010). This number was judged to be both realistic and sufficient for the study's goals, considering the specialized and challenging-to-reach nature of investigative journalists, particularly those active on social media.The provided Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents by age.

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics of Demographics Characteristics

Table 2: *Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	113	90.4
Female	12	9.6
Total	125	100.0

The age distribution of the respondents, as displayed in Table 3, suggests that investigative journalists have a wide variety of experience levels. The fact that most participants (45.6%) were between the ages of 25 and 34 indicates that professionals in their early to mid-career stages are heavily involved in investigative journalism on social media. The presence of more seasoned professionals in the field is indicated by the fact that 26.4% of respondents in the 35–44 age range came next. Furthermore, 12.8% of respondents were in the 18–24 age range, indicating the participation of younger

journalists who may be just starting their careers or have just graduated. 10.4% of participants were between the ages of 45 and 54, and the oldest cohort, comprising 4.8% of the sample, was 55 years of age or older. According to this distribution, social media investigative journalism in Pakistan draws professionals from a variety of backgrounds and career stages, with a focus on younger and middle-aged individuals.

Table 3: *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Age*

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
18–24	16	12.8
25–34	57	45.6
35–44	33	26.4
45–54	13	10.4
55 and above	6	4.8
Total	125	100.0

A highly educated sample of investigative journalists who took part in the study is revealed by Table 4, which lists the respondents' educational backgrounds. Professionals working in social media investigative journalism have a strong academic background, as evidenced by the majority of respondents (46.4%) having an MA or MSc. Following this were 9.6% of participants with an MPhil degree and 24.8% of participants with a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree. Furthermore, 5.6% of the respondents had a Master of Science (MS) degree, and 8.8% had a Bachelor of Arts (BA). The presence of highly advanced academic credentials in the field was indicated by the smaller percentage (2.4%) who had obtained a doctorate. Just a small percentage of participants (0.8%) reported having less formal education, such as a diploma, intermediate degree, or matriculation. These results imply that the majority of the investigative journalists included in the study's sample are highly qualified, which probably helps to their critical engagement with complex social issues through digital platforms.

Table 4: *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Qualification*

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Matric	1	.8
Intermediate	1	.8
BA	11	8.8

BS	31	24.8
MA / MSc	58	46.4
MPhil	12	9.6
MS	7	5.6
Doctorate (PhD)	3	2.4
Diploma holder	1	.8
Total	125	100.0

The respondents' professional backgrounds, as displayed in Table 5, demonstrate a wide variety of investigative journalism techniques used at various career stages. Twenty-eight percent of the participants had four to six years of experience, 16.8% had seven to nine years, and a sizable portion (21.6%) had one to three years. These numbers show that a sizable portion of the sample's investigative journalists are professionals in their early to mid-career stages who are actively involved in the rapidly changing digital media landscape. Furthermore, 12% had 10–12 years of experience, and 8.8% had 13–15 years, indicating a long history of work in the field. Interestingly, 20% of those surveyed said they had worked in investigative journalism for more than 15 years, indicating a high degree of proficiency and sustained involvement in the field. Within Pakistan's investigative journalism community, this distribution guarantees a fair representation of viewpoints from both seasoned and up-and-coming professionals.

Table 5: *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Experience*

Experiences	Frequency	Percent
1–3 years	27	21.6
4–6 years	26	20.8
7–9 years	21	16.8
10–12 years	15	12.0
13–15 years	11	8.8
More than 15 years	25	20.0
Total	125	100.0

The respondents' organizational affiliations, as displayed in Table 6, demonstrate a wide range of media outlets within Pakistan's investigative journalism environment. The growing importance of technology-driven platforms in investigative reporting is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of participants were associated with electronic media (36.8%), followed by digital or online media outlets (25.6%). With 16.8% of respondents identifying with traditional newspapers and magazines, print media continued to be significant. Furthermore, 5.6% of respondents identified as independent journalists and 12.8% as freelance journalists, highlighting the existence of self-directed reporting professionals in the industry. Just 2.4% of respondents said they had experience working for news organizations. This distribution highlights the importance of looking at both institutional and independent use of social media platforms for investigative purposes, and it also reflects the diversity of investigative journalism practice in Pakistan.

Table 6: *Media Affiliation of Respondents*

Media Affiliation	Frequency	Percent
Print Media	21	16.8
Electronic Media	46	36.8
News Agency	3	2.4
Digital/Online Media	32	25.6
Freelance Journalist	16	12.8
Independent Journalist	7	5.6
Total	125	100.0

The distribution of journalistic beats among respondents, as displayed in Table 7, demonstrates the variety of investigative focus areas found in Pakistani media. Given the political sensitivity and complexity of the national context, political reporting became the most popular beat, employing 36% of investigative journalists. There is a strong focus on accountability and social issues, as evidenced by the fact that crime and law enforcement was the second most reported area (16.8%), followed by social justice and inequality (14.4%) and human rights violations (12.8%). Judicial reporting (3.2%), environmental concerns (8.0%), and corporate and financial fraud (8.8%) were other specialized beats. Investigative journalism plays a multifaceted role in addressing important social, political,

and economic issues in Pakistan, as demonstrated by this variety of beats.

Table 7: *Respondents by Beat Distribution*

Beat Distribution	Frequency	Percent
Political	45	36.0
Crime and Law Enforcement	21	16.8
Judicial	4	3.2
Social Justice and Inequality	18	14.4
Financial/Corporate Fraud	11	8.8
Human Rights Violations	16	12.8
Environmental Issues	10	8.0
Total	125	100.0

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Key Research Variables

The variables that formed the basis of this investigation were the subject of the descriptive statistics of the key research variables were presented. The descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS. Comprehensive statistical data on the important variables, such as mean scores, standard deviations, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), are shown in Table 9.

The calculated mean and standard deviation for each variable were as follows: Social Media usage (M = 3.21, SD = 0.66), Prospects of Social Media (M = 1.96, SD = 0.60), Challenges of Social Media (M = 2.61, SD = 0.34), and Future Prospects of Social Media (M = 1.92, SD = 0.65). The internal consistency reliability scores were satisfactory across all variables: Social Media (α = 0.84), Prospects (α = 0.85), Challenges (α = 0.80), and Future Prospects (α = 0.90), confirming the reliability of the scales used.

4.2.1   Frequency Distribution of Social Media Utilization in Investigative Journalism Practices

Data on the frequency of social media use by investigative journalists is displayed in Table 9, which indicates a high level of use of digital platforms in their daily work. More than 62% of the sample actively incorporates social media into their research, as evidenced by the substantial majority of respondents who stated that they use it either

frequently (36.8%) or very frequently (25.6%). In contrast, 20.8% of respondents said they used social media occasionally, while smaller percentages said they used it infrequently (12.8%) or never (4%) at all. These results lend credence to the idea that social media sites have developed into an essential tool for Pakistani investigative journalists seeking, sharing, and confirming information.

Table 9 : *Frequency of Social Media Usage Among Investigative Journalists*

Social Media Usage	Frequency	Percent
Never	5	4.0
Rarely	16	12.8
Sometimes	26	20.8
Frequently	46	36.8
Very Frequently	32	25.6
Total	125	100.0

The daily time spent on social media by investigative journalists is shown in Table 10. According to the data, a sizable percentage of respondents use social media frequently and for prolonged periods of time. Twenty-eight percent of journalists said they used social media for three to four hours a day, followed by twenty-eight percent who used it for thirty to an hour and twenty-six percent who used it for one to two hours. 11.2% of respondents said they spent more than seven hours a day on social media, while a smaller but significant percentage (14.4%) said they used it for five to six hours. According to these findings, social media plays a crucial role in the journalistic processes of sourcing, monitoring, and disseminating news content, with the majority of investigative journalists devoting a substantial amount of their daily routine to it.

Table 10 : *Time Spent on Social Media by Investigative Journalists*

Time Spent on Social Media	Frequency	Percent
30 minutes to 1 hour	31	24.8
1–2 hours	27	21.6
3–4 hours	35	28.0

5–6 hours	18	14.4	
More than 7 hours	14	11.2	
Total	125	100.0	

The frequency of social media usage by Pakistani investigative journalists by platform is shown in Table 11. WhatsApp is the most widely used platform, according to the data, with 27.2% of respondents using it very frequently and 39.2% using it frequently. This makes it a powerful tool for communication and the spread of news. Given its popularity for real-time updates and professional engagement, Twitter (now X) also ranks highly, with 16.8% of users using it very frequently and 40% using it frequently. Facebook comes next, with 33.6 percent of participants using it frequently and 13.6% using it very frequently. YouTube has moderate usage, with 31.2% of users using it regularly and the same percentage occasionally, perhaps as a result of its role in the consumption of long-form content. Conversely, Instagram and TikTok are less popular, with a larger percentage of respondents reporting that they use them infrequently or never (28.8% and 39.2%, respectively). According to this trend, text- and communication-based platforms are more essential to investigative journalism practices in Pakistan, even though visual platforms are somewhat relevant.

Table 11: *Frequency of Using Social Media Platforms by Investigative Journalists*

Platforms	Very Frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Facebook	17 (13.6%)	42 (33.6%)	33 (26.4%)	21(16.8%)	12(9.6%)	125
Twitter (X)	21(16.8%)	50(40.0%)	31(24.8%)	12(9.6%)	11(8.8%)	125
YouTube	9 (7.2%)	39 (31.2%)	39(31.2%)	28 (22.4%)	10 (8.0%)	125
Instagram	3 (2.4%)	21 (16.8%)	32 (25.6%)	33 (26.4%)	36 (28.8%)	125
TikTok	6 (4.8%)	18 (14.4%)	25 (20.0%)	27 (21.6%)	49 (39.2%)	125
WhatsApp	34 (27.2%)	49 (39.2%)	17 (13.6%)	14 (11.2%)	11 (8.8%)	125

The frequency of social media use in Pakistan for different types of investigative

journalism is shown in Table 12. With 25.6% (64 respondents) reporting very frequent usage and 39.2% (98 respondents) reporting frequent usage, the data show that increasing awareness is the most common activity carried out on social media. This emphasizes how powerful social media is for advocacy and public outreach. Comparably, it is common practice to use social media for visual tools; of those surveyed, 21.6% (54 respondents) engage very frequently, and 36.8% (92 respondents) engage frequently. With 19.2% (48 respondents) publishing investigative content very frequently and 35.2% (88 respondents) publishing it frequently, the platform's usefulness for direct content dissemination is also evident.

The distribution of audience engagement, on the other hand, is somewhat more evenly distributed, with a significant 32.8% (82 respondents) only occasionally engaging and 11.2% (28 respondents) engaged very frequently and frequently. Another important role is promoting transparency through social media; moderate but significant efforts to foster trust are demonstrated by the 16.0% (40 respondents) who use it very frequently and the 32.8% (82 respondents) who use it frequently. Lastly, 16.8% of respondents (42 respondents) and 33.6% of respondents (84 respondents) collaborate with other journalists on social media very frequently and frequently, respectively, highlighting the importance of social media as a tool for professional coordination and networking. Overall, the results indicate that while social media is dominated by core investigative tasks like content publication and awareness-raising, Pakistani investigative journalists also heavily utilize interactive and collaborative platforms.

Table 12: *Frequency of using Social Media Activities by Investigative Journalists*

Item	Very Frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
SM for publishing content	19.2% (48)	35.2% (88)	28.0% (70)	12.8% (32)	4.8% (12)	125
SM for visuals tools	21.6% (54)	36.8% (92)	22.4% (56)	12.0% (30)	7.2% (18)	125
SM for audience Engagement	11.2% (28)	30.4% (76)	32.8% (82)	16.8% (42)	8.8% (22)	125

SM for Promoting transparency	16.0% (40)	32.8% (82)	29.6% (74)	12.8% (32)	8.8% (22)	125
SM for Collaboration	16.8% (42)	33.6% (84)	30.4% (76)	11.2% (28)	8.0% (20)	125
SM for awareness	25.6% (64)	39.2% (98)	21.6% (54)	8.8% (22)	4.8% (12)	125

4.2.2 Descriptive Statistics: Perceived Prospects to Investigative Journalism on Social Media

Respondents' opinions about the function of investigative journalism on social media (SM) in Pakistan are shown in Table 13. The results indicate a generally favorable assessment of its contributions to society.

With 35.2% (44 respondents) strongly agreeing and 44.0% (55 respondents) agreeing, a sizable majority of respondents think that social media investigative journalism is essential to spreading awareness about corruption. This shows a great deal of faith in the medium's ability to expose unethical behavior.

Similarly, there is agreement on the importance of social media investigative journalism in promoting social justice and equality, with 40.0% (50 respondents) strongly agreeing and another 40.0% (50 respondents) agreeing that it raises awareness of human rights.

Responses were a little more evenly distributed when it came to enhancing accountability. While 40.0% (50 respondents) and 24.8% (31 respondents) strongly agree, a significant 24.8% (31 respondents) were neutral, suggesting a moderate degree of skepticism or uncertainty about the direct impact of social media in holding people or institutions accountable.

Regarding the amplification of unheard voices, a similar trend was noted, with 45.6% (57 respondents) agreeing and 25.6% (32 respondents) strongly agreeing. Despite 20.0% (25 respondents) being neutral, this indicates that social media investigative journalism is generally seen as an inclusive tool.

Finally, regarding raising political awareness, 40.0% (50 respondents) agreed and 36.8% (46 respondents) strongly agreed, indicating the perceived ability of social media to educate the public about political issues. There was some disagreement, though, as 10.4%

(13 respondents) disagreed or strongly disagreed and 12.8% (16 respondents) were neutral.

Overall, the data shows that respondents strongly believe social media investigative journalism plays a significant role in promoting accountability, awareness, and democratic engagement in Pakistan.

Table 13: *Perceptions of Public Awareness through Investigative Journalism on Social Media*

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Investigative journalism on SM raises awareness about corruption	35.2% (44)	44.0% (55)	12.8% (16)	4.0% (5)	4.0% (5)	125
Investigative journalism on SM promotes human rights awareness	40.0% (50)	40.0% (50)	8.0% (10)	6.4% (8)	5.6% (7)	125
Investigative journalism on SM improves accountability	24.8% (31)	40.0% (50)	24.8% (31)	5.6% (7)	4.8% (6)	125
Investigative journalism on SM amplifies unheard voices	25.6% (32)	45.6% (57)	20.0% (25)	2.4% (3)	6.4% (8)	125
Investigative journalism on SM creates awareness on political issues	36.8% (46)	40.0% (50)	12.8% (16)	4.0% (5)	6.4% (8)	125

The opinions of respondents regarding the contribution of multimedia tools, including images, videos, and infographics, to enhancing investigative journalism on social media are shown in Table 14. Most people agreed (32.8%) or strongly agreed (56.0%) with this statement, suggesting that multimedia components are highly valued for capturing audiences' attention and telling intricate tales. Limited skepticism was demonstrated by the small percentages that disagreed (0.8%) and were neutral (10.4%).

Table 14: *Role of Multimedia Tools in Enhancing Investigative Journalism on Social Media*

Multimedia Tools	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	70	56.0
Agree	41	32.8
Neutral	13	10.4
Disagree	1	.8
Total	125	100.0

The effectiveness of user-generated content (UGC) in expanding investigative journalism's social media reach is summarized in Table 15 by the respondents. Most respondents agreed (48.0%) or strongly agreed (26.4%) that user-generated content (UGC) has a positive impact, indicating that its importance in audience engagement and story amplification is acknowledged. There was minimal opposition to the idea, as 17.6% of respondents were neutral and just 6.4% disagreed or 1.6% strongly disagreed.

Table 15: *Role of User-Generated Content in Expanding Investigative Journalism's Audience on Social Media*

User-Generated Content	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	33	26.4
Agree	60	48.0
Neutral	22	17.6
Disagree	8	6.4
Strongly Disagree	2	1.6
Total	125	100.0

The opinions of respondents regarding the effectiveness of social media in Pakistani investigative journalism in increasing public awareness are shown in Table 16. Strong faith in social media's function as a vehicle for public education is demonstrated by the large majority who either agreed (44.8%) or strongly agreed (40.8%). Just 10.4% were neutral, and only 3.2% and 0.8%, respectively, disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Table 16: *Usage of Social Media in Raising Public Awareness through Investigative Journalism*

Public Awareness	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	51	40.8
Agree	56	44.8
Neutral	13	10.4
Disagree	4	3.2
Strongly Disagree	1	.8
Total	125	100.0

The respondents' opinions of how well social media platforms amplify underrepresented stories and voices in investigative journalism are shown in Table 17. While 9.6% were neutral, the majority agreed (28.0%) or strongly agreed (43.2%) that social media is important in this respect. Social media's ability to promote inclusivity is widely believed, as evidenced by the small percentage of respondents who disagreed (5.6%) or strongly disagreed (1.6%).

Table 17: *Role of Social Media in Amplifying Diverse Voices in Investigative Journalism*

Amplifying Diverse Voices	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	35	28.0
Agree	54	43.2
Neutral	27	21.6
Disagree	7	5.6
Strongly Disagree	2	1.6
Total	125	100.0

The effectiveness of social media in expanding investigative journalism's worldwide reach and teamwork is shown in Table 18. Significantly more people agreed (47.2%) or strongly agreed (41.6%) with this role, demonstrating a strong belief in social media's ability to link journalists worldwide and promote cross-border cooperation. The fact that so few people disagreed (2.4%) or remained neutral (8.8%) indicates that there is little doubt about its worldwide influence.

Table 18: *Role of Social Media in Global Reach and Collaboration in Investigative Journalism*

Global Reach and Collaboration	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	41.6
Agree	59	47.2
Neutral	11	8.8
Disagree	3	2.4
Total	125	100.0

4.2.3   Descriptive Statistics: Key Challenges to Investigative Journalism on Social Media

The frequency with which investigative journalists in Pakistan face different difficulties when utilizing social media platforms is shown in Table 19.

With 44.0% (55 respondents) reporting encountering fake information frequently and 31.2% (39 respondents) reporting encountering it very frequently, fake information was the most frequent challenge reported. This underscores the pervasive concerns regarding misinformation in digital journalism spaces. Just one respondent, or 0.8%, said they had never encountered this problem.

Significantly, 32.8% (41 respondents) reported having financial constraints occasionally, 32.0% (40 respondents) reported having them frequently, and 15.2% (19 respondents) reported having them very frequently. This suggests that most encounter ongoing financial obstacles when creating investigative material.

Of the respondents, 37.6% (47) reported encountering ethical issues frequently, 12.8% (16) reported encountering them very frequently, and 35.2% (44) reported encountering them occasionally. This demonstrates that journalists deal with moral conundrums on a daily basis.

Regarding legal limitations, 26.4% (33 respondents) said they occasionally encountered them, while 33.6% (42 respondents) said they encountered them frequently and 21.6% (27 respondents) very frequently. This indicates a great deal of worry about legal risks and regulatory constraints.

24.8% (31 respondents) reported experiencing pressure from authorities frequently, and 23.2% (29 respondents) reported experiencing it very frequently. Furthermore, 28.8% of the 36 respondents reported experiencing it occasionally, indicating ongoing institutional pressure on investigative journalists.

Lastly, 31.2% (39 respondents) and 20.8% (26 respondents) reported threats and safety concerns frequently and very frequently, respectively. This emphasizes how journalists frequently run personal risks when working on social media investigations. Overall, the data show that Pakistani investigative journalists deal with a number of ongoing, frequently overlapping issues that affect their capacity to function well on social media, including false information, ethical and financial pressures, and safety concerns.

Table 19: *Frequency of Challenges Faced in Practicing Investigative Journalism on Social Media*

Items	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently	Total
Fake Information	0.8% (1)	4.8% (6)	19.2% (24)	44.0% (55)	31.2% (39)	125
Financial Constraints	4.0% (5)	16.0% (20)	32.8% (41)	32.0% (40)	15.2% (19)	125
Ethical Issues	1.6% (2)	12.8% (16)	35.2% (44)	37.6% (47)	12.8% (16)	125
Legal Limitations	4.8% (6)	13.6% (17)	26.4% (33)	33.6% (42)	21.6% (27)	125
Pressure from Authorities	8.0% (10)	15.2% (19)	28.8% (36)	24.8% (31)	23.2% (29)	125
Threats and Safety	5.6% (7)	16.8% (21)	25.6% (32)	31.2% (39)	20.8% (26)	125

According to respondents, fake news and disinformation pose a significant obstacle to investigative journalism on Pakistani social media, as shown in Table 20. A substantial majority strongly agreed (66.4%) or agreed (24.8%) that this issue poses a significant obstacle, indicating a strong consensus on the threat it presents to the credibility and effectiveness of journalistic practices online. There was little disagreement

about the challenge's seriousness, as evidenced by the small percentage of participants who were neutral (6.4%), disagreed (0.8%), and strongly disagreed (1.6%).

Table 20: *Challenge of Misinformation to Investigative Journalism on Social Media*

Misinformation	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	83	66.4
Agree	31	24.8
Neutral	8	6.4
Disagree	1	.8
Strongly Disagree	2	1.6
Total	125	100.0

According to Table 21, insufficient training and low levels of digital literacy are frequently cited as obstacles to Pakistan's successful use of social media for investigative journalism. There is broad agreement on this issue, as evidenced by the 92.8% of respondents who either strongly agreed (46.4%) or agreed (46.4%). Very few disagreed (0.8%) or strongly disagreed (0.8%), and only 5.6% were neutral. According to these results, improving digital skills is thought to be crucial for raising the caliber and impact of investigative journalism on social media.

Table 21: *Challenge of Limited Digital Literacy Among Investigative Journalists on Social Media*

Limited Digital Literacy	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	58	46.4
Agree	58	46.4
Neutral	7	5.6
Disagree	1	.8
Strongly Disagree	1	.8
Total	125	100.0

Table 22 shows that respondents strongly believe that the laws and regulations in place are insufficient to address the difficulties Pakistani investigative journalists

encounter on social media. A total of 75.2% agreed (41.6%) or strongly agreed (33.6%) with this opinion, indicating a significant worry about regulatory support and legal protections. Only a small percentage disagreed (2.4%) or strongly disagreed (1.6%), while 20.8% remained neutral, indicating that there is little reason to be skeptical of this perception. This demonstrates the broad demand for legal reform to encourage digital investigative journalism.

Table 22: *Inadequacy of Legal Framework for Investigative Journalism on Social Media*

Legal Framework	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	42	33.6
Agree	52	41.6
Neutral	26	20.8
Disagree	3	2.4
Strongly Disagree	2	1.6
Total	125	100.0

According to Table 23, a sizable majority of participants believe that one of the biggest obstacles facing Pakistani investigative journalists using social media is financial sustainability. A total of 79.2% of respondents agreed (45.6%) or strongly agreed (33.6%) with this concern. Only 4.8% disagreed and 1.6% strongly disagreed, while 14.4% were neutral. These results point to widespread agreement regarding the financial difficulties journalists encounter when continuing their investigative work on digital platforms.

Table 23: *Economic Challenges for Investigative Journalists on Social Media*

Economic Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	42	33.6
Agree	57	45.6
Neutral	18	14.4
Disagree	6	4.8
Strongly Disagree	2	1.6
Total	125	100.0

Table 24 shows that many Pakistani investigative journalists struggle to maintain moral principles when using social media. Maintaining ethics on these platforms is difficult, according to 79.2% of respondents who either strongly agreed (35.2%) or agreed (44.0%). In contrast, just 4.0% disagreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed, while 16.0% were neutral. These findings point to a general worry about the moral dilemmas that come up in online investigative reporting.

Table 24: *Ethical Challenges for Investigative Journalists on Social Media*

Ethical Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	44	35.2
Agree	55	44.0
Neutral	20	16.0
Disagree	5	4.0
Strongly Disagree	1	.8
Total	125	100.0

Investigative journalists in Pakistan are particularly concerned about online harassment and threats from officials and sources, as indicated in Table 25. A total of 76.8% of those surveyed agreed (42.4%) or strongly agreed (34.4%) with this view. A tiny percentage disagreed (2.4%) or strongly disagreed (1.6%), while 19.2% were neutral. These findings demonstrate a general understanding of the threats to digital safety that journalists encounter when conducting online investigative reporting.

Table 25: *Online Harassment Faced by Investigative Journalists on Social Media*

Online Harassment	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	43	34.4
Agree	53	42.4
Neutral	24	19.2
Disagree	3	2.4
Strongly Disagree	2	1.6
Total	125	100.0

According to Table 26, investigative journalists in Pakistan who use social media generally view legal and regulatory pressures from sources and officials as a challenge. Overall, 78.4% of respondents agreed (44.0%) or strongly agreed (34.4%) with this statement. Furthermore, only 1.6% disagreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed, compared to 19.2% who were neutral. These numbers show that legal intimidation or limitations associated with online investigative reporting are a major source of concern.

Table 26: *legal and regulatory pressures from sources and officialst Faced by Investigative Journalists on Social Media*

legal and regulatory challenges	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	43	34.4
Agree	55	44.0
Neutral	24	19.2
Disagree	2	1.6
Strongly Disagree	1	.8
Total	125	100.0

4.2.4 Descriptive Statistics: Pakistani Journalists' Perceptions of Investigative Journalism Future on Social Media

Investigative journalists' opinions about crucial upcoming initiatives to promote and protect investigative journalism on social media in Pakistan are reflected in Table 27. A sizable percentage of respondents strongly agreed that legal protection (47.2%), media literacy (43.2%), and fact-checking tools (49.6%) are essential for future development. Neutral responses remained moderate across all items, indicating partial uncertainty or variability in perspectives, while a significant portion agreed with the significance of secure tools (41.6%) and regulatory measures (36.8%).

The "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" categories received the lowest levels of support, totaling less than 10% for all items. This suggests that there is widespread agreement that these categories need to be improved in the future.

All things considered, the results highlight how urgent it is to put in place legislative frameworks, digital literacy initiatives, fact-checking systems, and digital safety tools in order to improve the efficacy and sustainability of investigative journalism

on social media in Pakistan.

Table 27: *Perceived Future Needs for Strengthening Investigative Journalism on Social Media*

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Future Legal Protection	4.8% (6)	1.6% (2)	10.4% (13)	36.0% (45)	47.2% (59)
Future Media Literacy	4.8% (6)	2.4% (3)	8.8% (11)	40.8% (51)	43.2% (54)
Future Fact-checking Tools	4.8% (6)	3.2% (4)	5.6% (7)	36.8% (46)	49.6% (62)
Future Secure Tools	3.2% (4)	4.0% (5)	12.8% (16)	41.6% (52)	38.4% (48)
Future Regulatory Measures	4.8% (6)	2.4% (3)	16.0% (20)	36.8% (46)	40.0% (50)

Investigative journalists' opinions of significant new developments in the use of social media for their work in Pakistan are shown in Table 28. Since smartphones are widely recognized as essential reporting tools, mobile journalism is the most widely accepted trend, with 40.8% (51) agreeing on its importance and 43.2% (54) strongly agreeing.

In a similar vein, 51.2% (64) agreed and 36.0% (45) strongly agreed with multimedia journalism. This implies that in order to better engage audiences on digital platforms, journalists are embracing a variety of media formats, such as infographics and videos.

With 48.0% (60) agreeing and 28.0% (35) strongly agreeing, citizen journalism was also seen favorably, suggesting that it is becoming more and more relevant as a supplement to traditional investigative techniques.

More than 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with collaborative networks (52.0% and 28.8%, respectively), indicating a tendency toward cross-platform or team-based research.

On the other hand, opinions regarding AI-based fact-checking tools were more divided. A significant percentage (24.0%, or 30) remained neutral, and 15.2% (19)

disagreed, despite the fact that 20.0% (25) strongly agreed and 39.2% (49) agreed. This suggests a need for additional trust-building and AI application training, as well as cautious optimism.

Finally, data journalism received positive ratings as well, with 44.8% (56) agreeing and 38.4% (48) strongly agreeing, indicating the growing significance of data analysis in investigative reporting.

Table 28: *Perceived Future Trends in Investigative Journalism Using Social Media in Pakistan*

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Data Journalism	2.4% (3)	2.4% (3)	12.0% (15)	44.8% (56)	38.4% (48)
Citizen Journalism	0.8% (1)	3.2% (4)	20.0% (25)	48.0% (60)	28.0% (35)
AI Fact-checking	1.6% (2)	15.2% (19)	24.0% (30)	39.2% (49)	20.0% (25)
Multimedia Journalism	3.2% (4)	0.8% (1)	8.8% (11)	51.2% (64)	36.0% (45)
Collaborative Networks	2.4% (3)	5.6% (7)	11.2% (14)	52.0% (65)	28.8% (36)
Mobile Journalism	2.4% (3)	0.8% (1)	12.8% (16)	40.8% (51)	43.2% (54)

CHAPTER-5

Discussion, Implications, Limitations, Recommendations and Conclusion

In the concluding chapter of the current research, the important results are discussed. Theoretical, methodological, contextual, and economic consequences have been examined. .The chapter concludes with implication, limitations and recommendation on further research.

5.1   Discussion

This chapter synthesizes the empirical findings of the study within the broader theoretical and contextual framework of investigative journalism and social media in Pakistan. The discussion is structured around the research objectives, addressing (1) the utilization of social media in investigative journalism, (2) the perceived opportunities, and (3) the key challenges faced by journalists. The chapter concludes with an exploration of future trends and policy recommendations, aligning with existing literature while contributing new insights specific to Pakistan's media landscape.

This study engage 125 Pakistani investigative journalists using Purposive and snowball sampling techniques to providing access to both seasoned media professionals and more difficult-to-reach practitioners operating in delicate environments.Nazir and Gillani's (2023) research on press freedom issues and Ivwighren and Oghiagbepha's (2024) work on social media adoption were carefully modified into the study's methodology to ensure instrument validity while retaining relevance to Pakistan's distinct media ecosystem.Based on the Technological Affordance Theory, the study looks at how investigative journalism practices in limited settings are influenced by the perceived action possibilities on social media platforms. The theory's lens aids in dissecting how journalists view and use various platform features—such as information gathering, secure communication, and audience engagement—in the intricate sociopolitical context of Pakistan.

The study's conclusions highlight a complex contradiction in Pakistani investigative journalists' attitudes towards and use of social media. On the one hand,

62.4% of journalists use platforms like WhatsApp (66.4%) and Twitter/X (56.8%) regularly or very frequently for essential reporting tasks, making them essential tools. Although Pakistan's adoption exhibits distinctive features, this reflects global trends where digital platforms enable real-time news dissemination and audience engagement (Bradshaw & Rohumaa, 2017). These platforms are mostly used by journalists for content publication (54.4%), awareness-raising (64.8%), and multimedia storytelling (58.4%), and they devote a substantial amount of time (28%), three to four hours a day, to these endeavours. However, the significant avoidance of visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (both 19.2%) indicates ongoing concerns about preserving journalistic credibility and depth in environments where shorter, sensational content dominates (Posetti et al., 2020).

There are three areas where social media's revolutionary impact is most evident. First, it is effective in drawing public attention to crucial concerns like corruption and human rights, as attested by an overwhelming 85.6% of journalists. Second, the platform's worldwide reach enables unprecedented cross-border partnerships (88.8%), expanding the horizons of investigative work. Third, the ways in which multimedia storytelling which was emphasised by 88.8% of respondents has redefined audience engagement through the use of films, infographics, and data visualisation have verified Carlson's 2015.

These benefits work in Pakistan's especially hostile online landscape, where reporters face four interrelated challenges. The most common type of misinformation is fake news, which 75.2% of respondents said they frequently encounter and 91.2% of them acknowledge as a serious concern. This finding is in line with Ward's (2010) warnings about the erosion of public confidence in digital journalism. This is made worse by legal pressures; according to 78.4% of respondents, they are subject to restrictive restrictions, 75.2% believe they have insufficient legal protections, and 48% believe they are directly under pressure from authorities (RSF, 2023; Nazir & Gillani, 2021).

Economic precarity further restricts practice, as 79.2% of organisations face financial constraints that force them to choose between public interest reporting and commercial viability. Pakistan is ranked as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists (RSF, 2023), with threats from both state and non-state actors. The most alarming statistic is probably that 76.8% of journalists experience online harassment.

In the future, journalists expect to see a number of revolutionary developments

that may change the nature of investigative work. Advanced multimedia reporting (87.2%) and mobile journalism (84%) are expected to take the lead, while technical solutions like AI fact-checking (59.2%) could aid in the fight against false information. The most encouraging is that 80.8% of respondents believe collaborative networks will play a major role in investigative work, possibly reducing resource limits and isolation. These changes point to a changing environment in which social media's function shifts from supporting to enabling investigative journalism, so long as systemic issues with sustainability, safety, and credibility can be resolved through concerted legislative efforts and professional cooperation.

5.1.1 Recommendations

To protect journalists from censorship and harassment and support investigative journalism in Pakistan's digital environment, this report calls for independent press freedom regulators and major changes to the law. Newsrooms should use encrypted communication methods, train their staff on digital security, and AI fact-checking technologies to fight false information and keep reporters safe. To reduce reliance on commercial revenue while keeping editorial independence, nonprofit partnerships and public grants should be used to create long-term funding models. These multi-level actions make it easier for investigative reporting to happen by dealing with the legal, technological, and economic problems that the research brought up.

5.2 Major Findings

This study used the technological affordance theory to investigate the opportunities, difficulties, and changing practices of social media's impact on investigative journalism in Pakistan. Using these frameworks, which are frequently overlooked in the Global South, the study discovered important trends influencing digital investigative reporting.

According to the findings, investigative journalists actively use social media for essential functions like communication with whistleblowers, audience engagement, story distribution, and information gathering. These platforms are appreciated for their ability to increase impact and reach, particularly in situations where traditional media is limited. But there are drawbacks to depending too much on digital tools, such as false information,

online harassment, digital surveillance, and algorithmic restrictions that reduce the visibility and legitimacy of content.

One major issue that surfaced was institutional gaps. The respondents pointed out the lack of organisational support in areas such as legal protection, ethical reporting guidelines for online reporting, and training on digital security. While more seasoned journalists prioritise content verification and credibility, younger journalists are more likely to embrace multimedia and mobile journalism.

Social media use and opinions about the efficacy of journalism were found to be strongly correlated, according to statistical analysis. Perceived barriers, especially false information and regulatory risks, weaken this relationship, highlighting the necessity of structural changes. By showing how journalists' practices are significantly impacted by their perceptions of what social media allows or restricts in Pakistan's restrictive media environment, the study supports the Technological Affordance Theory.

Purposive and snowball sampling were used to gather data from 125 investigative journalists using a methodical quantitative approach. The validity of the modified instrument in the local context was confirmed by a pilot study. All things considered, the study sheds important light on how investigative journalism is changing digitally and emphasises how urgently institutions must help journalists manage new threats.

5.2.1   Summary of Reliability

The reliability analysis of the study showed that all of the measured constructs had strong internal consistency. All scales showed acceptable to excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 (Challenges of Social Media) to 0.90 (Future Prospects of Social Media). The reliability of the questionnaire items was confirmed by the Social Media Usage ($\alpha=0.84$) and Prospects of Social Media ($\alpha=0.85$) scales, which both demonstrated good reliability.

5.3   Strengths Limitations and Future Recommendations

5.3.1   Theoretical Strengths

In the context of Pakistan's distinct media environment, this study offers several

important theoretical insights into understanding investigative journalism in the digital age. The study effectively illustrates how social media both supports and limits investigative reporting, bridging the gap between theories of digital journalism and real-world applications in constrictive settings. Applying and expanding Singer's (2014) framework for digital journalism, the results show the intricate dichotomy of social media platforms: on the one hand, they are instruments for international cooperation and public participation, but on the other, they are conduits for harassment and false information.

By combining ideas of digital resilience with conventional press freedom theories, the study contributes to theoretical understanding by illuminating how journalists create flexible tactics to deal with Pakistan's complex media environment. Studies on transnational journalism gain new insights from the empirical confirmation of social media's role in promoting cross-border investigative collaborations, which was acknowledged by 88.8% of respondents. The surprising results regarding platform preferences also cast doubt on widely held beliefs regarding the function of visual social media in professional journalism, pointing to the need for more complex theories of technology adoption in investigative work.

The study provides a model for analysing comparable media ecosystems in the Global South by placing theories of global digital journalism within the unique sociopolitical context of Pakistan. Our theoretical understanding of how investigative journalists navigate digital spaces where rapidly changing platform technologies and press freedom constraints collide is especially enhanced by the findings. These contributions pave the way for future investigations at the nexus of political communication, journalism practice, and digital media studies.

5.3.2 Methodological Strengths

This study exhibits a number of methodological strengths that improve its validity, reliability, and ability to shed light on Pakistani investigative journalism on social media.First, a quantitative and positivist approach is used in the research design, which is especially well-suited to looking at trends, perceptions, and connections between predetermined variables. The study guarantees objectivity and replicability by using statistical analysis and structured surveys, which is in line with accepted methods in media and communication research (Sekaran, 2003; Vaus, 2001). Data collection is

further standardised by using a 5-point Likert scale for both frequency-based and attitudinal items, which allows for accurate assessment of journalists' attitudes and behaviours.

Second, the difficulties in reaching a specialised population are addressed by the sampling strategy used in the study. The combination of purposive and snowball sampling guarantees that the sample is both representative and targeted, especially since Pakistan lacks a centralised database of investigative journalists. While snowball sampling broadens the reach to include professionals who are difficult to reach through peer referrals, purposeful sampling finds journalists who actively use social media for investigative work. This two-pronged strategy improves the study's external validity and reduces selection bias (Etikan et al., 2016).

Third, the study's internal consistency is reinforced by the meticulous instrument development process. After a pilot study with a subset of investigative journalists, the questionnaire was improved, and 11 of the original 38 items that were redundant or unclear were eliminated. The final instrument's efficiency, relevance, and clarity were enhanced by this iterative process, which also guaranteed the validity and reliability of the data gathered. Additionally, the pilot validated the viability of the online distribution approach (through Google Forms), which allowed for effective data collection and wide geographic coverage.

Fourth, the study closes a significant gap in the literature by concentrating on Pakistan's distinct media environment. While there is a wealth of research on digital journalism worldwide, this study places its findings in the context of Pakistan's sociopolitical environment, where press freedom is restricted and social media can be both empowering and dangerous. Through an analysis of journalists' firsthand experiences, the study offers nuanced insights into how local issues like harassment, misinformation, and legal ambiguities can either help or hinder technological affordances like real-time communication, multimedia storytelling, and global reach.

Lastly, the research goes beyond descriptive accounts to find actionable trends by statistically analysing variables like social media use, perceived prospects, challenges, and future outlook. In addition to providing evidence-based guidance for journalists, media organisations, and policymakers navigating digital transitions, this method

validates the applicability of Technological Affordance Theory in restricted media environments.

These methodological strengths, which are based on a strong design, adaptive sampling, rigorous instrumentation, contextual relevance, and analytical depth, work together to guarantee that the study's conclusions are reliable and significant, adding to the professional and academic conversation about investigative journalism in the digital age.

5.3.3   Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study, while methodologically robust, has certain limitations that should be acknowledged and addressed in future research.

Initially, the study was carried out solely within the media environment of Pakistan, and all participants were investigative journalists from Pakistan. The study provides valuable insights into how people use social media in a limited media environment, but it's possible that the results won't apply to other cultural or national contexts. Future research should replicate this study in other nations to investigate the ways in which cultural, political, and regulatory differences impact social media investigative journalism practices (Nazir & Gillani, 2023; Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018).

Second, the research did not use a fully longitudinal design, even though it used a structured quantitative approach. The ability to evaluate causal relationships or long-term trends in journalists' use of social media was limited by the fact that the data was gathered all at once. To learn more about how investigative journalism changes with shifting digital platforms and sociopolitical circumstances, future studies could use a longitudinal or time-lagged design with multiple data collection waves (Posetti et al., 2019; Tandoc & Maitra, 2018).

Third, this study did not distinguish between investigative journalists' distinct professional roles, such as full-time reporters, freelancers, or part-time contributors. Future research ought to examine whether social media usage, perceived opportunities, and challenges differ among various journalistic types, given the growing diversity in journalistic work arrangements. Further understanding of how employment structures

affect digital investigative practices may result from this (Carlson & Lewis, 2020; Deuze, 2007).

Fourth, while the study examined key variables such as social media affordances, challenges, and future outlook, it did not explore all potential factors that may impact investigative journalism in digital spaces. Future research could incorporate additional variables, such as algorithmic bias, digital security measures, or organizational support, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the field (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018; Napoli, 2019).

Finally, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital journalism by empirically testing the role of social media in investigative reporting within Pakistan. However, as digital platforms continue to evolve, further investigations are needed to keep pace with emerging trends, technologies, and threats. Researchers should explore new dimensions of digital journalism, including the impact of artificial intelligence, deepfake technology, and changing platform algorithms on investigative practices (Hermida, 2020; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

By addressing these limitations, future studies can build upon this research and provide deeper, more nuanced insights into the dynamic relationship between investigative journalism and social media.

5.4   Theoretical Implications of the Study

This study advances our knowledge of how investigative journalism adapts to social media in limited media environments, which leads to important theoretical contributions.

By empirically illustrating how Pakistani investigative journalists view and use social media's potential while navigating platform-specific limitations, the study first advances the Technological Affordance Theory. The results show how affordances like instant sharing and global connectivity are strategically used in spite of institutional pressures, validating the theory's applicability in non-Western contexts where digital freedoms are contested (Davis & Chouinard, 2017).

Second, the study advances the field of digital journalism by establishing a

connection between Pakistan's distinct socio-technical environment and media theories that are centred on the West. The majority of the literature currently in publication focusses on the function of social media in liberal democracies (Hermida, 2010), but this study shows how journalists in hybrid regimes use digital tools to get around established gatekeeping systems (Nazir & Gillani, 2023). By emphasising context-dependent adaptations, the results cast doubt on presumptions regarding uniform technology adoption.

Third, the study enhances methodological approaches to digital journalism research by integrating contextual analysis of Pakistan's media ecosystem with quantitative measurement of journalists' perceptions. This dual focus offers a framework for analysing journalism mediated by technology in settings with comparable constraints (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018).

5.5 Practical Implications

The study provides several stakeholders in Pakistan's media landscape with useful insights. The results show journalists how to use social media to its fullest investigative potential while avoiding hazards like harassment and false information. According to Posetti et al. (2019), news organisations can utilise these insights to create institutional protocols for source verification, digital security, and moral social media engagement.

Platform developers might reevaluate algorithmic structures that favour viral content over investigative content (Napoli, 2019). The study also helps legislators understand the necessity of legal frameworks that safeguard the freedom of the digital press while preventing the spread of false information (Freedom Network, 2023).

To prepare journalists for new challenges, training institutions should include courses on cybersecurity, data verification, and digital literacy. The study specifically highlights how urgent these interventions are in light of Pakistan's growing social media and internet penetration (PCP, 2022).

5.6 Contextual Implications

The study offers important new perspectives on Pakistan's changing media landscape, where social media both supports and threatens investigative journalism. The

results document the actual experiences of journalists working in a setting characterised by recording the ways in which platform regulations and cybercrime laws influence investigative techniques (RSF, 2023). exposing creative ways to get around censorship using encryption and other platforms.

Emphasising how journalists balance the demands of digital immediacy with traditional ethics These context-specific results provide comparative value for research in other semi-authoritarian contexts while challenging universalist presumptions about digital journalism (Shabbir & Yasin, 2020). According to the study, Pakistan is an important case study for comprehending the digital transformation of journalism under restrictions.

The study offers a framework for examining technology-journalism interactions in similarly intricate media ecosystems by firmly establishing theoretical ideas in local realities. On the basis of this foundation, future research can investigate new issues such as deepfake verification in limited settings and AI-assisted reporting.

5.7   Conclusion

In this study, the changing role of social media in Pakistani investigative journalism was thoroughly examined. Understanding the opportunities and difficulties faced by investigative journalists in the digital era was the specific focus of the study. A structured questionnaire was given to a sample of 125 investigative journalists from different parts of Pakistan as part of a quantitative research design. A pilot study was carried out to guarantee the validity and lucidity of the research tool before extensive data collection. The study looked at important factors like how often and for what reasons people use social media, the perceived advantages of increased transparency and public engagement, and the difficulties brought on by false information, online dangers, and regulatory restrictions. SPSS was used to interpret the data through descriptive statistics analysis. The theoretical framework used to explain how journalists engage with social media platforms' enabling and restricting features was the Technological Affordance Theory. The results showed that investigative journalists actively use social media for audience engagement, story development, and sourcing; however, they also encounter major obstacles like technological limitations, online harassment, and a lack of legal protections. Additionally, the study found new trends like citizen contributions,

multimedia storytelling, mobile journalism, and cooperative reporting networks. To improve their investigative work, journalists expressed a strong need for better training on digital safety, moral social media standards, and laws that support them.In addition to offering theoretical insights and useful suggestions for the future of journalism in politically complex and technologically changing contexts, this thesis provides insightful empirical information about how investigative journalism in Pakistan is adjusting to the digital age. All things considered, this study provides a pertinent and fact-based addition to our knowledge of investigative journalism in Pakistan's digital age. It acts as a guide for stakeholders looking to improve the practice of investigative reporting and lays the groundwork for future studies on technology-driven journalism in comparable media environments. For investigative journalism to remain a vital component of democratic accountability in Pakistan, it will be crucial to support these changing practices with focused training, safeguarding legal frameworks, and investments in digital tools.

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