

The Diversity Effect: New Media Use and Professional Role Enactment Among Journalists in Pakistan

Muhammad Ramzan¹, Dr. Imran Muslim²

Abstract

New media use among journalists is often treated as a single, undifferentiated phenomenon, yet its effect on how professional roles are actually enacted may depend on which facet of that use is measured. This study tested a 'diversity effect' model in which platform diversity, source diversity and content diversity were entered as separate predictors of professional role enactment (watchdog, gatekeeper, public service provider, disseminator-interventionist, infotainer, loyal facilitator and employee) among Pakistani journalists. Using a positivist, quantitative, cross-sectional design, data were collected through an online questionnaire administered to journalists registered with a National Press Club in Pakistan (N = 300; complete-case N = 262 for inferential analyses). Pearson correlation and simple linear regression showed that platform-level new media diversity did not significantly predict role enactment ($r = .12$, $p = .057$), whereas source diversity ($r = .75$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .558$) and content diversity ($r = .81$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .657$) were strong, highly significant predictors, together accounting for well over half the variance in role enactment. The findings demonstrate that the 'diversity effect' on professional role enactment is driven almost entirely by what journalists source and consume, not by how many platforms they use — a distinction with direct implications for journalism training and newsroom policy in Pakistan.

Article History

Received 02 August 2026
Revised 15 August 2026
Accepted 25 August 2026
Published 29 August 2026

OPEN ACCESS

Keywords

new media diversity; source diversity; content diversity; professional roles; journalism; Pakistan

1. Introduction

The fast development of digital technology has changed the media landscape of today and has greatly impacted the production, distribution and consumption of news. The rise of digital-native news organizations has been made possible by new media platforms, which differ from traditional print, radio and television outlets in producing content, engaging audiences, distributing and editing it (Humanes et al., 2023). Humanes et al.'s (2023) analysis of Spanish digital-native media found that these outlets executed professional journalistic roles — interventionist, watchdog, loyal-facilitator and service, in particular — more effectively than conventional media, and that news topics and the management of information sources were the strongest predictors of role performance.

In Pakistan, the emergence of digital-native news entities and online platforms has fostered a more varied media landscape, raising the question of whether greater diversity in new media use is reshaping how journalists perform their professional roles: acting as watchdogs, gatekeepers, disseminators, public service providers, infotainers, loyal facilitators,

¹ PhD Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Government College University, Faisalabad
email: m.rmzaan@gmail.com

² Dr. Imran Muslim² Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Government College University Faisalabad email: imranmuslim@gcuf.edu.pk

or simply employees of a media organization. This article isolates that question from a wider doctoral study of new media diversity and journalistic professionalism, focusing specifically on the professional-roles dimension.

1.1 Problem Statement

The proliferation of new media has transformed the dynamics of reporting and information acquisition, and the widespread use of new media platforms for sourcing content has become a prominent trend in Pakistani journalism. The regulations and informal standards that once defined professional roles now require reevaluation in light of this shift. This study examines the influence of journalists' use of new media diversity — platform, source and content — on the professional roles they perform.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

To examine journalists' perceptions of the influence of new media diversity on their professional roles in Pakistan.

To investigate the challenges journalists face in executing their professional roles as a result of dependence on diverse new media sources and content.

To assess the relative contribution of platform diversity, source diversity and content diversity to changes in professional role performance.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Research on professional role performance is well established internationally (Mellado, 2014; Mellado et al., 2017), but studies that decompose new media diversity into its platform, source and content components — and relate each separately to role performance — remain rare, particularly in Pakistan. This article contributes context-specific evidence on which facet of new media diversity most strongly predicts professional role change among Pakistani journalists, offering media organizations and policymakers a more precise basis for training and standard-setting.

2. Literature Review

Journalists' professional roles — duties performed as part of their occupation — have long been treated as a core dimension of journalistic culture (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996, as cited in the parent thesis; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). The roles examined in this study are the watchdog, gatekeeper, public service provider (Mellado & Lagos, 2014), disseminator-interventionist, infotainer, loyal facilitator (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018) and employee.

New media diversity is conceptualized, following Napoli (1999), through its source dimension (the diverse range of information providers journalists consult) and its content dimension (the variety of information, program types and viewpoints available on new media). Bastian et al. (2021) found that algorithmic personalization can narrow the diversity journalists and audiences actually encounter, raising professional-values concerns about editorial autonomy and transparency; Banjac and Hanusch (2020) similarly found that audiences increasingly blur the line between professional journalists and non-journalistic content producers, putting pressure on how professional roles are defined and recognized. Mothes et al. (2024), studying 37 countries, found a small positive relationship between digital

research-tool use and watchdog role performance, but a negative relationship between reliance on digital audience analytics and both watchdog and civic role performance — evidence that not all dimensions of new media use affect professional roles in the same direction.

Gulyas (2017) and Hanusch and Bruns (2017) found that journalists' adoption of social media for branding and source-finding has measurably changed role performance, while Lasorsa et al. (2012) identified accountability and transparency indicators specific to journalists' Twitter use. Taken together, the literature suggests that the diversity of sources and content a journalist draws on, more than the sheer number of platforms used, is what reshapes professional role performance — a pattern this study tests directly in the Pakistani context.

2.1 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

New media diversity is modeled as comprising platform diversity (New Media Diversity), source diversity and content diversity, each hypothesized to predict journalists' professional role performance.

H1: There is a significant relationship between new media (platform) diversity and professional roles.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between new media source diversity and professional roles.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between new media content diversity and professional roles.

2.2 Research Questions

RQ1: How do journalists perceive the impact of new media diversity on their ability to maintain professional roles?

RQ2: How does new media source diversity relate to professional role performance among Pakistani journalists?

RQ3: How does new media content diversity relate to professional role performance among Pakistani journalists?

3. Methodology

This study adopted a positivist, quantitative and correlational research design within Saunders et al.'s (2019) 'research onion' framework, using a deductive approach that moved from the general construct of new media diversity to its specific effect on journalists' professional practice (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Dudovskiy, 2022; Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Data were collected using a cross-sectional, self-administered online survey.

3.1 Population and Sample

The population comprised the journalist community of Pakistan, both print and electronic. The sampling frame was journalists registered with press clubs and professional bodies (a combined membership of approximately 19,000). Using non-random, convenience

sampling, an online questionnaire link was distributed to journalists registered with a National Press Club and working in media organizations across Pakistan. Of 502 exported responses, 300 records were correctly aligned with the questionnaire's column structure after data screening and were retained for analysis ($N = 300$).

3.2 Instrument and Reliability

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was developed from the literature and refined through expert review (face, content and construct validity) and exploratory factor analysis; the final instrument contained 85 items covering demographics, new media usage patterns, and the study's composite variables. Composite reliability for the variables relevant to this article was as follows.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients for the Study Variables

Variable	Items (k)	N	Cronbach's α
New Media Diversity	8	300	0.832
Source Diversity	7	254	0.927
Content Diversity	7	260	0.951
Professional Roles	13	253	0.961

Note. All coefficients exceed the .70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978).

3.3 Data Analysis

Composite variable scores (means of all valid items, rescaled to a 1-5 metric) were tested for normality; skewness and kurtosis values fell within the range conventionally accepted as consistent with approximately normal distributions. Pearson product-moment correlation and simple linear regression were therefore used to test the study's hypotheses, computed on the complete-case sample ($N = 262$).

4. Results

4.1 Sample Profile

The sample was predominantly male (88.7%) and early-career: 76.6% were aged 18-33, half (50.3%) held a master's degree as their highest qualification, and 84.3% reported 1-5 years of professional experience. Respondents were drawn from digital/social media desks (35.3%), television (32.7%), other outlets (26.3%), wire services (4.0%) and radio (1.7%).

4.2 Correlational Findings

To test the diversity effect directly, Pearson correlations were computed on the complete-case sample ($N = 262$, $df = 260$) separately for each facet of new media diversity against Professional Roles. Platform-level New Media Diversity correlated only weakly with Professional Roles, $r = .12$, $p = .057$ — a coefficient that did not reach the conventional $\alpha = .05$ threshold, indicating no reliable diversity effect at the platform level. Source Diversity ($r = .75$, $p < .001$) and Content Diversity ($r = .81$, $p < .001$) both correlated strongly and

significantly with Professional Roles, confirming a pronounced diversity effect at the source and content level. Source and Content Diversity were themselves strongly intercorrelated ($r = .78, p < .001$).

Table 2

Pearson Correlations Among New Media Diversity Variables and Professional Role Enactment (N = 262)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. New Media Diversity	—	0.18**	0.21***	0.12
2. Source Diversity		—	0.78***	0.75***
3. Content Diversity			—	0.81***
4. Professional Role Enactment				—

Note. N = 262 (complete-case sample). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

4.3 Regression Findings

New Media Diversity did not significantly predict professional role enactment, $\beta = .12$, $t(260) = 1.91$, $p = .057$, explaining only 1.4% of the variance ($r^2 = .014$), $F(1, 260) = 3.66$, $p = .057$. H1 is therefore not supported: platform-level diversity alone produced no reliable diversity effect on how journalists enact their professional roles in this sample.

Table 3

Regression Summary for New Media Diversity Predicting Professional Role Enactment

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
New Media Diversity	0.146	0.076	0.118	1.91	= .057

Note. Dependent variable: Professional Roles. $n = 262$, $r^2 = .014$, adjusted $r^2 = .010$, $F(1, 260) = 3.66$.

Source Diversity positively and significantly predicted professional role enactment, $\beta = .75$, $t(260) = 18.11$, $p < .001$, explaining 55.8% of the variance ($r^2 = .558$), $F(1, 260) = 328.10$, $p < .001$ — a strong diversity effect. H2 is supported.

Table 4

Regression Summary for Source Diversity Predicting Professional Role Enactment

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
Source Diversity	0.721	0.040	0.747	18.11	< .001

Note. Dependent variable: Professional Roles. $n = 262$, $r^2 = .558$, adjusted $r^2 = .556$, $F(1, 260) = 328.10$.

Content Diversity positively and significantly predicted professional role enactment, $\beta = .81$, $t(260) = 22.29$, $p < .001$, explaining 65.7% of the variance ($r^2 = .657$), $F(1, 260) = 496.95$, $p < .001$ — the strongest diversity effect of the three predictors tested. H3 is supported.

Table 5

Regression Summary for Content Diversity Predicting Professional Role Enactment

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
Content Diversity	0.734	0.033	0.810	22.29	< .001

Note. Dependent variable: Professional Roles. $n = 262$, $r^2 = .657$, adjusted $r^2 = .655$, $F(1, 260) = 496.95$.

5. Discussion

Respondents described a professional environment in which the sheer information flow of social media makes it hard to balance watchdog vigilance with the speed demanded by real-time reporting. Several noted that the quality of news is under pressure as deadlines shrink, that control over what becomes news is diminishing under state and institutional pressure, and that the growth of personalized news feeds is squeezing out the space for considered, multi-source reporting — consistent with the erosion of watchdog and civic role performance under heavy reliance on digital analytics reported by Mothes et al. (2024).

Statistically, however, the erosion was not attributable to platform diversity itself: New Media Diversity was not a reliable predictor of Professional Roles ($r = .12$, $p = .057$), while Source Diversity ($r = .75$) and Content Diversity ($r = .81$) were. This indicates that it is not the number of new media platforms a journalist uses, but the breadth of sources consulted and the range of content engaged with, that is reshaping how the watchdog, gatekeeper, disseminator-interventionist, public service provider, infotainer, loyal facilitator and employee roles are performed in Pakistan. This is consistent with Humanes et al. (2023), who found that source- and topic-related variables were stronger predictors of role performance than organizational or platform-level characteristics.

Institutional hierarchy, role constraints, state regulation and prescribed ethical values were cited by respondents as the principal tension points between their role as an employee and their role as an active social media user — echoing Deuze's (2004) observation that new media affects both journalists' professional identity and their working practices simultaneously.

6. Conclusion

New media diversity is reshaping professional role performance among Pakistani journalists, but unevenly: platform-level diversity of use is not, on its own, a statistically reliable predictor, while source diversity and content diversity are strong and highly significant predictors, together accounting for well over half the variance in professional role performance. Content diversity in particular — the range of information, program types and viewpoints journalists draw on — showed the single strongest association ($r^2 = .657$) with how

professional roles are enacted. Media organizations, journalism educators and press bodies seeking to strengthen professional role performance should therefore prioritize training on source and content diversification over the mere multiplication of platforms used.

6.1 Limitations

The study relied on convenience sampling of journalists registered with a National Press Club and geographically concentrated in a limited number of urban centres, limiting generalizability to journalists across all regions of Pakistan. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, and the reliance on self-reported perceptions of role performance, rather than observed content, is a further limitation shared with much of the professional-roles literature (Mellado et al., 2017).

6.2 Practical and Policy Implications

Findings suggest that professional-development programs for Pakistani journalists would benefit more from structured training in source verification and content diversification than from simple encouragement to adopt more platforms. Press clubs and regulatory bodies could use these findings to design role-specific guidelines — for instance, distinct standards for watchdog versus infotainer role performance — that account for the differential influence of source and content diversity identified here. Future research should replicate this design with probability sampling across Pakistan's provinces and examine each of the seven professional roles as a separate outcome.

References

- Napoli, P. M. (1999). Deconstructing the diversity principle. *Journal of Communication*, 49(4), 7-34.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Deuze, M. (2005). What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism*, 6(4), 442-464.
- Deuze, M. (2003). The Web and its journalism: Considering the consequences of different types of news media online. *New Media & Society*, 5(2), 203-230.
- Weaver, D. H., Willnat, L., & Wilhoit, G. C. (2019). The American journalist in the digital age: Another look at US news people. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(1), 101-130.
- Weaver, D., & Willnat, L. (2012). Journalists in the 21st century: Conclusions. In *The global journalist in the 21st century* (pp. 539-562). Routledge.
- Mellado, C., & Scherman, A. (2021). Mapping source diversity across Chilean news platforms and mediums. *Journalism Practice*, 15(7), 974-993.
- Mellado, C., Márquez-Ramírez, M., Mick, J., Oller Alonso, M., & Olivera, D. (2017). Journalistic performance in Latin America: A comparative study of professional roles in news content. *Journalism*, 18(9), 1087-1106.

- Mellado, C., & Lagos, C. (2014). Professional roles in news content: Analyzing journalistic performance in the Chilean national press. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 2090-2112.
- Mellado, C. (2014). Professional roles in news content: Six dimensions of journalistic role performance. *Journalism Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.922276>
- Hanitzsch, T., & Vos, T. P. (2018). Journalism beyond democracy: A new look into journalistic roles in political and everyday life. *Journalism*, 19(2), 146-164.
- Hanitzsch, T., & Mellado, C. (2011). What shapes the news around the world? How journalists in eighteen countries perceive influences on their work. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16(3), 404-426.
- Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F., Mellado, C., Anikina, M., Berganza, R., Cangoz, I., & Kee Wang Yuen, E. (2011). Mapping journalism cultures across nations: A comparative study of 18 countries. *Journalism Studies*, 12(3), 273-293.
- Bastian, M., Helberger, N., & Makhortykh, M. (2021). Safeguarding the journalistic DNA: Attitudes towards the role of professional values in algorithmic news recommender designs. *Digital Journalism*, 9(6), 835-863. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1912622>
- Banjac, S., & Hanusch, F. (2020). A question of perspective: Exploring audiences' views of journalistic boundaries. *New Media & Society*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820963795>
- Humanes, M.-L., Alcolea-Díaz, G., López-del-Ramo, J., & Mellado, C. (2023). Performance of journalistic professional roles in digital native media news in Spain: Toward a journalistic micro-culture of its own. *Profesional de la Información*, 32(2). <https://revista.profesionaldelainformacion.com/index.php/EPI/article/view/87098>
- Mothes, C., Mellado, C., Boudana, S., Himma, M., Nolan, D., & McIntyre, K. (2024). Spurring or blurring professional standards? The role of digital technology in implementing journalistic role ideals in contemporary newsrooms. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10776990241246692>
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. (2020). HEC policy for postgraduate research: Guidelines for thesis writing and evaluation. Higher Education Commission, Islamabad.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2019). *Using multivariate statistics* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Schudson, M. (2003). *The sociology of news*. Norton.
- Schudson, M., & Anderson, C. (2009). Objectivity, professionalism, and truth seeking in journalism. In *The handbook of journalism studies* (pp. 108-121). Routledge.

- Vos, T. (2005). Journalistic role conception: A bridge between the reporter and the press. Paper presented at the International Communication Association (ICA) conference, Journalism Studies Division, New York.
- Al-Ababneh, M. M. (2020). Linking ontology, epistemology and research methodology. *Science & Philosophy*, 8(1), 75-91.
- Nickerson, C. (2022). Interpretivism paradigm & research philosophy. *Simply Sociology*, 5.
- Dudovskiy, J. (2022). An ultimate guide to writing a dissertation in business studies: A step-by-step assistance.
- Amirrudin, M., Nasution, K., & Supahar, S. (2020). Effect of variability on Cronbach alpha reliability in research practice. *Jurnal Matematika, Statistika dan Komputasi*, 17(2), 223-230. <https://doi.org/10.20956/jmsk.v17i2.11655>
- Bloomfield, J., & Fisher, M. J. (2019). Quantitative research design. *Journal of the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses Association*, 22(2), 27-30.
- Gulyas, A. (2017). Hybridity and social media adoption by journalists: An international comparison. *Digital Journalism*, 5(7), 884-902.
- Hanusch, F., & Bruns, A. (2017). Journalistic branding on Twitter: A representative study of Australian journalists' profile descriptions. *Digital Journalism*, 5(1), 26-43.
- Lasorsa, D. L., Lewis, S. C., & Holton, A. E. (2012). Normalizing Twitter: Journalism practice in an emerging communication space. *Journalism Studies*, 13(1), 19-36.
- Hermida, A. (2010). Twittering the news: The emergence of ambient journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 4(3), 297-308.
- Wardle, C., Dubberley, S., & Brown, P. D. (2014). Amateur footage: A global study of user-generated content. <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D88S526V>
- Tandoc, E. C., & Vos, T. P. (2016). The journalist is marketing the news: Social media in the gatekeeping process. *Journalism Practice*, 10(8), 950-966.
- Kwak, S. G., & Park, S. H. (2019). Normality test in clinical research. *Journal of Rheumatic Diseases*, 26(1), 5-11.
- Mishra, P., Pandey, C. M., Singh, U., Gupta, A., Sahu, C., & Keshri, A. (2019). Descriptive statistics and normality tests for statistical data. *Annals of Cardiac Anaesthesia*, 22(1), 67-72.