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Media Ethics in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Algorithmic Transparency and Human Responsibility for Information

Kacem Abismail
University of Ghardaia, Algeria. Email: abismail.kacem@univ-ghardaia.dz
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Abstract
This study examines the profound transformations brought about by artificial intelligence in media practice and the ethical challenges that have consequently affected the core of journalism as a profession. Algorithms have increasingly become unseen partners in shaping editorial decision-making and steering public opinion, raising complex questions concerning transparency, credibility, and human responsibility for information. The study focuses on analysing three principal dimensions: first, the impact of artificial intelligence on ethical values in the media, as reflected in the diminishing human role and the escalating risks of falsification and algorithmic bias; second, the notion of algorithmic transparency and its role in reinforcing the credibility of media content; and third, human responsibility in the face of algorithms. In this context, the study maintains that the human conscience remains the ultimate ethical point of reference, despite the continuing advancement of technical systems. The study concludes that safeguarding media ethics in the age of artificial intelligence requires the construction of a framework that balances technological innovation with human accountability through codes of conduct, algorithmic auditing, and professional training that consolidate the values of honesty and transparency.
Keywords: Ethics; Artificial intelligence; Algorithm; Responsibility

I. Introduction: Global media today is witnessing an unprecedented epistemological and communicative revolution driven by artificial intelligence, which is no longer merely an auxiliary technical tool but has become a cognitive agent shaping collective consciousness and forming public opinion. Algorithms have shifted from the level of technical data organisation to that of cognitive and behavioural guidance, as they have come to determine what we read, when we read, and how we think, through recommendation systems and automated content filtering that reconfigure our perceptual space according to their own mathematical logic.

This profound shift reopens the question of the relationship between technology and ethics or between "computational rationality" and the "human conscience". While algorithms seek efficiency, speed, and accuracy, media ethics remains concerned with credibility, justice, and the public's right to knowledge free of bias. Here, a structural tension emerges between technical intelligence, which seeks to control information, and the human being, who seeks to understand and interpret it.

Contemporary media practice has thus come to face two challenges: on the one hand, the necessity of keeping pace with technological development, which has altered the structure of production, editing, and distribution; and, on the other hand, the preservation of traditional ethical standards of journalism, such as objectivity, verification, and responsibility. Reports by the

Reuters Institute (2024) and UNESCO (2023) affirm that the growing reliance on artificial intelligence in news editing has led to the emergence of new phenomena such as deepfakes, algorithmic bias, and a loss of editorial transparency.

This intervention seeks to analyse the contemporary ethical tension between technical intelligence and the human conscience, between the logic of the algorithm and the logic of values, within a context characterised by immense digital acceleration that threatens to weaken the human dimension of journalistic practice. It also aims to unpack the central problem: how can human and professional values be preserved in a digital environment dominated by automated decisions that lack awareness or conscience?

This question is not confined to the technical domain alone; rather, it extends to the philosophical, social, and political dimensions of the media, given that algorithms have become instruments of soft power that exert an invisible influence over audience choices and modes of thinking. Accordingly, reasserting the human conscience within the ecosystem of intelligent media currently constitutes an ethical and professional priority to ensure that technology remains in the service of truth, not the other way around.

I.1. Research Problem:

In light of the radical transformations imposed by artificial intelligence on the contemporary media system, journalistic practices are no longer governed solely by human logic; instead, they have entered a phase of algorithmic mediation, in which the machine has become a partner in producing, directing, and distributing information. This shift has generated a rupture in the profession's ethical structure, as the standards of truthfulness and credibility have moved from the journalist's conscience to the logic of the algorithm, which operates according to criteria of technical efficiency rather than human values.

The human role in selecting and editing news has receded in favour of artificial intelligence systems that learn from user data and reshape media coverage priorities on the basis of digital engagement rather than newsworthiness. Here, a fundamental problem arises regarding the ethical boundaries of journalists' and media institutions' responsibility: does the journalist remain responsible for the information when an algorithm selects, edits, or ranks it? Furthermore, can content generated by artificial intelligence be regarded as an extension of journalistic practice, or is it an automated output devoid of professional conscience?

The research problem addressed in this study does not stop at analysing the technical impact of artificial intelligence on media practice; rather, it extends to dismantling the deep structures that are reshaping the very concept of truth. The issue is no longer merely about a new medium or an auxiliary tool but rather about the emergence of an "automated epistemic authority" that competes with humans in determining what society considers accurate information or a discourse worthy of circulation. Here, the problem becomes more complex because algorithms lack ethical consciousness. However, they control the discursive structure of content, amplifying certain news items and marginalising others solely on the basis of computational logic. This is what makes the ethical question today an existential one: how can we preserve the independence of human judgement in an environment in which algorithms serve as intermediaries, producers, and editors simultaneously? This study seeks to examine this profound tension between human consciousness, which produces value, and artificial intelligence, which produces "attention" to determine whether journalism is capable of defending its value-based essence amid this algorithmic deluge.

In light of escalating concerns about deepfakes, algorithmic bias, and the concealment of digital filtering mechanisms from the public, the ethical question in intelligent media has become a question of existence rather than merely a professional question because the loss of

transparency means the loss of trust, and the loss of trust means the collapse of the essence of the media as a fourth estate.

Accordingly, the central problem that this study seeks to deconstruct is as follows:

To what extent can contemporary media preserve the principles of transparency and ethical accountability in an age in which algorithms have assumed the production of information and the steering of public opinion instead of humans?

I.2. Artificial Intelligence and Changing the Rules of Media Ethics

• **Structural transformation: From a technical intermediary to a cognitive agent**

Artificial intelligence today represents more than a mere auxiliary tool in newsrooms; it has become a genuine epistemic partner in the design and distribution of media content. This structural transformation raises fundamental questions about the limits of the human role in journalism. For example, a report by the Reuters Institute shows that more than 80% of the journalists surveyed use artificial intelligence tools, to some degree, in their daily work. However, only 13% acknowledged that their newsrooms have a clear policy for using this technology. On the other hand, a recent academic analysis revealed that approximately 9% of the articles published since the summer of 2025 in 1,500 American newspapers were either entirely generated or produced with the assistance of artificial intelligence, with explicit disclosure of such use in fewer than 5% of them. arXiv This illustrates that artificial intelligence has entered the sphere of editorial decision-making, selecting the topic, formulating the headline, and distributing content, which means that "information" is no longer produced exclusively by the journalist; instead, there is an automated intermediary participating in its production, thereby redefining the concept of source and content in journalism.

• **Immediate ethical repercussions: Speed of dissemination versus depth of verification:**

The growing reliance on algorithms that prioritise reach and engagement has led, in some institutions, to a decline in the prioritisation of verification and source tracing. For example, a study conducted by Jumio revealed that 72% of respondents are "concerned on a daily basis" that they might be deceived by a fabricated video or image (a deepfake).

Moreover, Sumsub's report for the first quarter of 2024 recorded a year-to-year increase of 245% in deepfake cases in specific countries, with an increase exceeding 300% in the United States alone.

Accordingly, journalism that prioritises the speed of publication, perhaps driven by distribution algorithms, risks commodifying news or rendering it more subject to zones of technical power than to the domain of professional conscience. This necessitates a reassessment of professional priorities: is breaking publication more important, or rigorous verification?

• **The phenomenon of "automated news sites" and the risk of amplifying misinformation:**

Analyses by specialised entities reveal that many news websites worldwide fall under what are termed "automatically generated news sites" or operate through semiautomated technologies without adequate human oversight, thereby increasing the risk of publishing low-quality or misleading content.

For example, one available report indicates that multiple platforms use automatically generated content solely to profit from advertising without verifying its accuracy. This deepens the crisis of trust in the media. Furthermore, the rate of disclosure about the use of artificial intelligence in editing among major publishing outlets remains low, exacerbating the problem.

This reality calls for reconsidering the organisational structure of media institutions: what is the proportion of automated intervention? What review standards are applied? Moreover, does a human editorial board fully oversee the processes?

• **Deepfakes and verification: Escalating technical and security risks:**

The technology behind deepfakes has reached a level that cannot be overlooked. For example, a study by iProov revealed that only 0.1% of participants could distinguish between authentic and fabricated content with complete accuracy.

The upwards trend is also evident: in the first quarter of 2024, several countries recorded enormous increases in deepfake incidents, such as South Korea (+1,625%) and Indonesia (+1,550%), compared with the previous year.

This level of risk means that the media is not merely affected by this reality; it may become part of a cycle in which artificial intelligence generates fabricated content that is promoted owing to weak verification tools. Therefore, journalistic scrutiny, manual verification, and forgery-detection tools have become indispensable components of the media ethics system.

• **The ethical dimension: Transparency and responsibility as central axes:**

Amid these transformations, two core values come to the forefront: algorithmic transparency and human accountability. Transparency means that the public has the right to know how information is produced, which criteria the algorithm uses, and how the output is reviewed. Accountability means that there is an entity that assumes responsibility for errors and that media institutions are prepared to disclose the involvement of artificial intelligence in their content.

For example, the Reuters Foundation report issued by World Press Freedom Day (2025) revealed that more than 80% of institutions use artificial intelligence, yet only 13% have a clear policy governing its use.

This disparity between widespread adoption and scarce regulation places the media before a genuine test of integrity: access to “what is shown to you” has increasingly become the outcome of largely opaque algorithms, which necessitates the rebuilding of a new “contract of trust” between institutions and the public.

• **Implications for journalistic professionalism: The logic of conscience in the face of the rationalities of the machine**

With artificial intelligence entering the very heart of journalism, the job description is shifting from that of a mere "correspondent" or "editor" to that of a "technical and ethical reviewer. Journalists today require skills in data analysis, an understanding of algorithms, and the capacity to intervene critically in automatically generated content.

According to an academic study by Peña-Alonso et al. (2025), approximately 89.9% of participating journalists believe that artificial intelligence will lead to a substantial increase in the risk of misinformation.

This indicates that the journalistic conscience can no longer be confined to the editing stage alone; it must extend to the design of the technical tools journalists use and to ensuring that journalistic labour does not become automated replication devoid of human review.

Analytical synthesis:

What is unfolding is not merely a technical conflict but also a redistribution of roles within the media field. Whereas journalism in the past functioned as "a platform for news and the citizen, it has today become "a complex system in which artificial intelligence participates as an active element. Within this context, fundamental ethical questions arise: what is the value of publication if the algorithm determines what reaches the audience? What credibility does a news story have if it is produced without human review? How can the space of ethical conscience be safeguarded within an institution that relies, in part, on artificial intelligence?

The answer does not lie in rejecting technology but in designing a new set of media ethics that encompasses every component of this reality: the human, the machine, and the institution.

Artificial intelligence has brought about a profound transformation in newsrooms, reshaping journalism's ethical rules, as professional values are no longer grounded solely in human awareness; instead, they are

reconfigured according to computational criteria such as engagement and shareability. This threatens to reduce ethics to operational rules subject to automated systems. The danger inherent in digital transformation lies in replacing journalistic values with market values, whereby speed and reach are prioritised over truth and verification, and the recipient is reduced to a user, thus necessitating critical accountability regarding the role of the machine and the limits of its intervention in relation to human responsibility.

3.1. Algorithm Transparency and the Credibility of Information

Artificial intelligence technologies have transformed the relationship between the media and the public, as algorithms now control how content is presented. This raises ethical challenges that affect credibility, responsibility, and the public's right to understanding, and it renders algorithmic transparency an essential condition for maintaining trust.

• Defining algorithmic transparency and its ethical significance:

Algorithmic transparency is a practical and ethical principle that requires enabling public and regulatory bodies to understand the role that algorithms play across the chain of producing and distributing media content: how were the models built? Which data were used to train them? What criteria govern the filtering and ranking of content? What level of human review is applied to their outputs? Technically complex disclosure aimed solely at specialists is insufficient; disclosure must be translated into language accessible to the public and explain the algorithm's impact on news material. Transparency here is not an administrative slogan but an ethical obligation: it restores the citizen's epistemic right to ask, "Why did I receive a particular piece of information? ", and it enables interpretation and evaluation.

• Empirical indications of the risks arising from a lack of transparency:

Observational reports indicate a noticeable increase in the emergence of so-called "automatically produced news sites, or websites that rely on semiautomated content production with limited human oversight. Documentation by centres such as NewsGuard tracked the spread of hundreds of such sites from 2023–2024, operating text-generation models for commercial and advertising purposes alongside weak editorial verification standards. This is not merely a technical phenomenon; it produces a sensitive environment in which it becomes difficult for the public to distinguish between professionally produced material and automated editing.

Newsrooms are seeing growing use of artificial intelligence tools, but the lack of clear regulatory policies creates a transparency gap that may threaten the credibility of journalistic work.

Constraints and difficulties in implementing transparency:

Despite its benefits, implementing transparency encounters a series of practical impediments:

- **Protection of intellectual property by model developers and technology providers:** Software companies' reluctance to disclose their models and criteria, under the pretext of safeguarding intellectual property, hinders transparency and full disclosure.
- **Technical and human costs:** Establishing and maintaining provenance registers or specialised auditing teams requires resources that are not available to all institutions, particularly those with limited budgets.
- **Uneven levels of public understanding:** Drafting disclosures that are clear and sufficiently simplified to inform the general public without overwhelming them with technical detail constitutes a communication challenge.
- **Institutional resistance:** Revealing operational errors or constraints may negatively affect an outlet's reputation in the short term, leading some administrations to hesitate to provide full disclosure.

Addressing these challenges requires multitrack solutions: legal mechanisms that mandate a reasonable level of disclosure, technical support

through public initiatives or academic partnerships, and awareness-raising programmes for the public.

Algorithmic transparency is not merely a regulatory requirement; it is the cornerstone of rebuilding trust within the contemporary media sphere. When mechanisms for content classification or criteria for news selection are concealed, the public becomes a "blind" consumer within an epistemic environment governed by a logic that it cannot monitor or contest. The real danger lies not in the existence of algorithms but in their transformation into an "invisible authority" that reshapes public consciousness without oversight. Accordingly, transparency is not simply the disclosure of technology; it is the restoration of the citizen's right to know how information flows and which forces influence their choices. It is also a mechanism for moving the algorithm from the status of a "black box" to that of a "justified" system whose effects on news ranking or salience determination can be traced. When such transparency is absent, the media becomes a sphere governed more by the logic of computational prediction than by the logic of social responsibility.

4.1. Human responsibility in the context of algorithms:

Among the most pressing ethical questions in the current media landscape is a pivotal one:

"Can artificial intelligence make mistakes?" However, the more profound and more perilous question is as follows:

"Who bears responsibility when artificial intelligence makes mistakes?"

This question lies at the heart of contemporary ethical debate because it touches the essence of the relationships between human beings and machines, as well as between accountability and editorial decision-making. As algorithms' capacity to generate, edit, and publish content in a quasiautonomous manner increases, the boundaries of human accountability correspondingly recede. Many media institutions have begun to hear phrases such as "the system chose the headline" or "the algorithm recommended the story" in an implicit attempt to transfer the burden of decision-making from humans to technology.

• **The transformation of the concept of responsibility within an intelligent media environment:**

Historically, journalistic responsibility was clearly defined: the journalist was responsible for the accuracy of what they wrote, the editor-in-chief for publishing it, and the institution for accountability to the public and the law. However, with artificial intelligence entering the media production cycle, editorial decision-making has become distributed between humans and machines such that ethical boundaries are no longer as clear as they once were.

A study conducted by the European Journalism Observatory (2024) indicated that 61% of European media institutions use artificial intelligence tools in editing or publishing without establishing clear protocols to determine editorial responsibility. This regulatory absence has generated what the German researcher Thomas Bühler (Bühler, 2023) terms a "zone of editorial irresponsibility, in which the human element disappears behind artificial intelligence in order to justify editorial errors or unintended misinformation.

For example, in May 2023, *Sports Illustrated* published entire articles written by artificial intelligence bots under the names of fictitious writers. When the matter was exposed, management disclaimed responsibility, claiming that “the automated system created the content”, which led to a severe crisis of trust with the public and a 27% decline in engagement over two weeks (Reuters AI Report, 2024).

• **Ethical responsibility: The human at the heart of decision-making:**

Despite advances in technical capabilities, artificial intelligence lacks ethical consciousness: it does not know "good" and "evil" or distinguish between "harm" and "benefit". All it does is execute programmed instructions on the basis of previously entered

data and preferences. Hence, the human being remains the true party responsible for the consequences of the machine's actions.

UNESCO (2024), in its report on "the ethics of artificial intelligence and the media, emphasises that artificial intelligence must be treated as a tool, not as an independent moral agent. The final decision to publish remains a human responsibility that cannot be fully delegated.

The Council of Europe (2023), in its document "artificial intelligence and media freedom, goes further by stressing the principle of Human Accountability First, meaning that the human remains central to every link in the chain of media decision-making, regardless of how efficient automated systems may become.

From this perspective, incorporating a “human-in-the-loop” mechanism is not merely an administrative option but also an ethical and regulatory obligation, ensuring continuous human oversight at every stage of content production from data collection, through editing, to publication.

The analysis makes clear that artificial intelligence does not eliminate human ethical responsibility; instead, it deepens it. Every algorithm is, ultimately, a reflection of prior human choices, whether in programming, data selection, or publishing mechanisms. Accordingly, the absence of human oversight does not signify the machine’s independence; it signifies the absence of conscience. The media, in essence, is not merely a profession of transmitting information; it is an ethical mission that places the human being at the heart of every decision, even in the age of algorithms.

General findings

The examination of the relationship between artificial intelligence and media ethics shows that the shift from human journalism to algorithmic journalism was not merely a form of technical development; rather, it constituted a profound philosophical transformation in the structure of responsibility within the media process.

The findings indicate that the absolute risk lies not in artificial intelligence's capacity to make errors but in the inability of current ethical and institutional systems to determine who is held accountable when an error occurs. Reports by the Reuters Institute (2024) and Harvard Kennedy School (2024) show that 61% of media institutions that use artificial intelligence tools lack a clear framework for allocating editorial responsibilities in the event of falsification or bias.

The findings also show that artificial intelligence has contributed to increased productivity and faster editorial processing; however, it has simultaneously reduced the space for human sensibility in journalistic coverage, particularly in humanitarian issues, wars, and crises, where the machine measures salience through quantitative digital metrics rather than ethical values. This was noted in the UNESCO (2024) report, which revealed that "coverage that relies on artificial intelligence systems tends to marginalise the human dimension of the news in favour of figures and computational trends".

From another perspective, the findings demonstrate that algorithmic transparency remains very limited, as major institutions treat their algorithms as a "black box,” preventing the public from knowing how information is produced or how news is ranked within digital interfaces. As a result, public trust in the media is gradually declining; according to the *Digital News Report 2024*, 58% of users worldwide suspect that the news reaching them online is subject to undisclosed automated steering.

The findings confirm that the absence of such transparency, alongside dual and ambiguous responsibility, has produced an imbalance between technological innovation and professional conscience. Institutions pursue digital primacy while overlooking that credibility is their true capital. In this sense, the media has become threatened with the loss of "humanity, that is, the value-based essence that connects it to society, right, and truth.

General Analysis:

Artificial intelligence has not abolished media ethics; instead, it has compelled their redefinition. Instead of ethics being merely a professional commitment on the part of the journalist, they have now become a complex, institutional responsibility that encompasses programmers, editors, managers, and decision-makers.

We have moved from a model of "the individual journalist responsible for their text" to a model of a "technical–editorial team" in which the human and the algorithm participate together. This transition confronts us with a new reality that requires new instruments of accountability, extending beyond traditional law towards a form of technological ethical governance.

A fundamental paradox emerges here: the more algorithms increase their capacity to learn and predict, the more the human capacity to exercise complete control over them diminishes. This paradox imposes a new principle in media philosophy: "dual awareness, the human's awareness of their responsibility, and their awareness of the limits of their knowledge in relation to the machine.

The findings clearly reveal that artificial intelligence has not come to replace human beings but has changed the nature of the relationship between them within the media institution. Content produced today through artificial intelligence cannot be separated from the digital conditions of its production, leading to a reality in which information assumes a dual character: human–algorithmic. This duality deepens the challenge for traditional ethical frameworks designed for a world in which responsibility is linear and straightforward. Now, however, responsibility has become "distributed" and intertwined, which requires the construction of new accountability models capable of addressing this entanglement. The findings also show that the essence of the media relationship has become suspended between two parties: an institution attempting to keep pace with technological development and an audience that fears losing control over the information it receives. This fragile situation demonstrates that the future of the media will not be built on technology alone but on the human capacity to reengineer professional values in a world of increasing complexity.

Proposed Solutions:

• **Establishing a global legislative and ethical framework:** An international code of ethics for artificial intelligence in the media should be adopted under the supervision of international organisations to define human responsibilities and ensure precise accountability mechanisms.

• **Adopting the "human-in-the-loop" principle (human-in-the-loop):** Human oversight is necessary at all stages of content production, with the documentation of automated interventions, to ensure that algorithms are governed by human conscience.

• **Establishing algorithmic auditing units (Ethical Auditing Units):** Specialised committees should be created within media institutions to evaluate the use of artificial intelligence periodically and to issue transparent reports on its editorial impact, following the example of the BBC (2024) and *the Guardian* (2024).

• **Strengthening digital ethical culture:** University modules on the ethics of journalistic artificial intelligence should be introduced, with a focus on value-based awareness and the development of critical thinking among journalists.

• **Developing tools for digital transparency and accountability:** Media institutions need to adopt AI traceability tools that enable the public to know when and where artificial intelligence was used in producing content. This transparency will rebuild lost trust and limit the spread of algorithmic misinformation.

• **Activating the role of professional organisations and civil society:** Journalists' unions and human rights organisations can play an effective oversight role by monitoring algorithmic violations and defending the principle that "the machine is not held accountable, but the human is answerable".

General conclusions:

The most serious threat confronting contemporary media is not artificial intelligence itself but the human relinquishment of responsibility regarding it. Artificial intelligence has no conscience and cannot distinguish between truth and misinformation, except to the extent that we instil values in it.

Accordingly, the ethical challenge in modern media lies not in the following question: "To what extent can we rely on the machine?", but in a more fundamental question: to what extent does the human being remain present in media decisions despite the dominance of algorithms?

The overarching conclusion advanced by this study is that the future of the media will not be determined by artificial intelligence but rather by the manner in which human beings engage with it. The machine, however powerful it may become, remains devoid of ethical awareness, whereas journalism as a human activity can be built only upon values. Hence, the decisive question is not, "To what extent will algorithms become advanced? ", but rather, "To what extent will we remain capable of placing the human being at the centre of the media process?". If a new ethical system is not developed to accommodate this evolving technological reality, the media will risk losing its role as a fourth estate. They gradually become an operational system governed by the logic of data rather than the logic of truth. Reasserting a human being does not mean resisting technology; it means directing it and continually reminding it that truth is not merely an equation but a value.

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