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The Shadow AI Paradox: Journalistic Agency, Identity Reconfiguration, And Human AI Symbiosis in UAE Newsrooms: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract

The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools has produced a striking empirical contradiction within the United Arab Emirates (UAE) media sector: a state of "Institutional Decoupling" where high individual adoption (76.7% daily usage) is met with stagnant organizational readiness (scoring 1.2/5). This study names this phenomenon the "Shadow AI Paradox" and investigates how media professionals navigate this policy vacuum to maintain authority and manage technological upheaval. Utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the research draws on a quantitative survey of 249 media professionals—an "elite sample" with 66.2% possessing over 10 years of experience—triangulated with semi-structured interviews.

Quantitative analysis via Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) reveals that professional skills ($\beta=0.41, p<0.001$) and organizational culture ($\beta=0.38, p<0.01$) are the primary drivers of AI adoption, which significantly enhances media performance ($\beta=0.47$). However, a critical "Verification Gap" is identified: while journalists aggressively utilize AI as an "efficiency engine" for production speed (85% agreement), usage of content-integrity tools remains negligible (12.5% for deepfake detection).

Qualitative findings uncover the mechanisms of "Auto-Didactic Resilience," where practitioners manage a 70% training disconnect through self-directed learning to manage "Technostress". The study documents a "Functional Bifurcation" of roles, where journalists designate tasks as either "clerical" (machine-delegable) or "sacred" (human-irreplaceable), and asserts that "Linguistic Sovereignty" through the Arabic NLP Advantage serves as a vital tool for maintaining professional agency. This research contributes the Augmented Journalist Competency Model (AJCM) to theory, providing a roadmap for transitioning from unregulated efficiency to a governed, culturally authentic trust

infrastructure. Future phases of this research will further expand the qualitative strand through additional practitioner interviews to deepen the thematic analysis of role reconfiguration.

Keywords: Shadow AI Paradox; Journalistic Agency; Technostress; Mixed-Methods; UAE Newsrooms; Algorithmic Journalism; Human-in-the-Loop (HITL); Arabic NLP; Institutional Decoupling; Augmented Journalist