

## THE DUAL ROLE OF ICT IN INDIAN JOURNALISM: EMPOWERING SKILLS AND ENABLING GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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### Abstract

*Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has fundamentally altered the landscape of journalism globally, with India experiencing a profound shift in its media ecosystem. This paper investigates the dual role of ICT in Indian journalism: its capacity to empower journalists with advanced skills and its simultaneous facilitation of government influence over media narratives in the digital age. Through a quantitative survey of 30 mass media students, the study examines ICT integration in journalism education, its impact on skill development, and its implications for media independence and public perception. The findings reveal a heavy reliance on ICT tools for modern journalism, coupled with significant challenges such as technical skill gaps, high costs, and inadequate training. Moreover, the research uncovers a prevalent perception that ICT amplifies government control, eroding the media's traditional watchdog role and transforming it into a conduit for state agendas. The paper concludes with a SWOT analysis, critiques the Indian education system's failure to prepare students for an ICT-driven media landscape, and highlights the media's increasing alignment with governmental interests.*

**Keywords:** *ICT, Indian journalism, journalism education, government influence, media independence, digital age, skill development*

### Introduction

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has redefined journalism, transitioning it from a traditional, print-centric practice to a dynamic, technology-driven profession. In India, a country with one of the world's most vibrant media landscapes and a rapidly digitizing society, ICT serves as a catalyst for journalistic innovation. Tools such as social media platforms, content management systems (CMS), data analytics software, and video editing applications have empowered journalists to create content, engage audiences, and report in real-time with unprecedented efficiency. This technological empowerment has democratized information dissemination, enabling journalists to reach wider audiences and adapt to the demands of a digital-first world.

However, this transformation is not without its complexities. Alongside its empowering potential, ICT has introduced vulnerabilities, particularly in the context of media independence. In India, where the government wields significant influence over economic and regulatory frameworks, ICT has become a double-edged sword. While it equips journalists with cutting-edge tools, it also facilitates centralized control, allowing the state to shape media narratives through digital surveillance, algorithmic manipulation, and economic pressures. As digital platforms dominate information flows, questions about the autonomy of Indian journalism have intensified, with critics arguing that the media

increasingly serves as a "lapdog" to power rather than a "watchdog" for the public.

This study explores the dual role of ICT in Indian journalism, focusing on its contributions to skill enhancement and its susceptibility to government influence. By surveying 30 mass media students, the research assesses ICT's integration into journalism education, its impact on skill acquisition, and its broader implications for media credibility. The central research question is: *How does ICT simultaneously enhance journalistic capabilities and enable government influence over India's digital media landscape?*

### Objectives

1. To evaluate the extent of ICT integration in journalism education and its impact on skill development among mass media students in India.
2. To analyze the challenges associated with adopting ICT in journalism education and practice.
3. To investigate perceptions of ICT's role in facilitating government influence over Indian media narratives.
4. To assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of ICT in Indian journalism.
5. To provide recommendations for enhancing journalism education and safeguarding media independence in the digital age.

## Review of Literature

The intersection of ICT and journalism has been a focal point of scholarly inquiry, with researchers highlighting both its transformative potential and its inherent risks. Pavlik (2000) argues in *Journalism and New Media* that ICT has revolutionized journalism by introducing digital tools that enhance efficiency, interactivity, and global reach. He emphasizes the shift from traditional gatekeeping to a participatory model, driven by technologies like CMS and data analytics. Similarly, Deuze (2007) in *Media Work* describes ICT as fostering a "convergence culture," where journalists must master multimedia skills to remain relevant in a digital ecosystem.

In the Indian context, Thussu (2007) in *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow* credits ICT with propelling India's media industry to global prominence. He highlights the role of social media and mobile journalism in democratizing content creation, particularly in a diverse and multilingual nation like India. However, this optimism is tempered by concerns about media autonomy. Chakravartty and Roy (2013) in their article "Media Pluralism Redux" argue that India's digital media landscape is increasingly shaped by corporate and political forces, with ICT serving as a tool for narrative control. Vanita Kohli-Khandekar (2013) in *The Indian Media Business* further notes that while ICT reduces operational costs, it exposes media houses to government influence through advertising revenues and regulatory policies.

Rural journalism, too, reflects this duality. Ninan (2007) in *Headlines from the Heartland* observes that ICT has improved access to information in India's hinterlands, yet digital monitoring and censorship by the state limit its emancipatory potential. Recent studies reinforce these findings. Singh and Pandey (2019) in "Role of ICT in Journalism: A Study of Indian Media" highlight ICT's role in skill development but warn of its misuse in spreading propaganda. Gupta (2021) in "Digital Journalism in India: Opportunities and Challenges" notes that while ICT empowers journalists, it also amplifies government narratives through platforms like Twitter and YouTube, where algorithms can be manipulated to prioritize state-friendly content.

The literature also critiques journalism education. McNair (2009) in *The Future of Journalism* stresses the need for curricula to incorporate ICT training to prepare students for a digital-first industry. In India, however, Muppidi (2008) in *Media Education in India* argues that journalism programs lag in technical skill development, leaving graduates ill-equipped to navigate ICT complexities. This educational gap exacerbates the

media's vulnerability to external influence, as untrained journalists struggle to critically engage with digital tools and platforms.

## Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, utilizing a survey of 30 mass media students in India. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to journalism education and practice. A structured questionnaire was designed with four sections:

1. **Familiarity and Importance of ICT:** Assessing students' exposure to and perceptions of ICT tools.
2. **Influence of ICT on Journalism Education:** Evaluating the frequency and impact of ICT training.
3. **Challenges in ICT Adoption:** Identifying barriers to effective ICT integration.
4. **Perceptions of Indian Media:** Exploring views on media independence and government influence.

Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree") and open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights. Data were analyzed statistically using percentages and interpreted to draw meaningful conclusions. While the sample size is small, it provides a focused snapshot of student perspectives, laying the groundwork for broader future research. The methodology ensures objectivity while addressing the study's core objectives.

## In-Depth Analysis and Interpretation

The survey results illuminate ICT's dual role in Indian journalism, offering insights into its empowering and controlling dimensions.

### Section 1: ICT Familiarity and Importance

- **Familiarity:** 26 students (86.7%) reported being "very familiar" with ICT tools, while 4 (13.3%) were "somewhat familiar." This high familiarity reflects the pervasive presence of technology in students' academic and personal lives.
- **Necessity:** All 30 respondents (100%) agreed that ICT is essential for modern journalism, citing tools like social media, CMS, data analytics, and video editing software as indispensable. This consensus underscores ICT's role as a cornerstone of contemporary media practice.

### Section 2: Influence of ICT on Journalism Education

- **Training Frequency:** Only 14 students (46.7%) reported frequent ICT training, while 16 (53.3%) described it as

occasional, rare, or nonexistent. This inconsistency highlights a critical gap in journalism curricula.

- **Skill Enhancement:** 24 students (80%)—12 "strongly agree," 12 "agree"—affirmed that ICT improves skills like writing, research, and content creation. The remaining 6 (20%) were neutral, possibly due to limited access to training.
- **Popular Tools:** Students frequently mentioned platforms like Canva, Remini, Inshorts, and WordPress, indicating a preference for user-friendly, innovative tools.
- **Competitiveness:** 22 students (73.3%) believed ICT enhances competitiveness, while 8 (26.7%) disagreed, potentially reflecting concerns about market saturation or unequal access.

### Section 3: Challenges in ICT Adoption

- **Barriers:** 18 students (60%) identified "lack of technical expertise" as the primary challenge, followed by "high costs" (8, 26.7%) and "resistance to change" (4, 13.3%). These findings point to both human and economic constraints in leveraging ICT effectively.

### Section 4: Perceptions of Indian Media

- **Independence:** 18 students (60%) viewed Indian media as "completely dependent" on external forces, 6 (20%) as "partially independent," and 6 (20%) were neutral. This skepticism suggests a perceived erosion of editorial freedom.
- **Government Influence:** 24 students (80%)—2 "always," 6 "often," 16 "occasionally"—believed media prioritizes government narratives, with only 6 (20%) seeing this as rare. This perception aligns with concerns about state control.
- **ICT's Role:** All 30 respondents (100%) agreed that ICT facilitates media alignment with government agendas, citing social media algorithms and online platforms as key enablers.
- **Watchdog vs. Lapdog:** 28 students (93.3%) saw the media as a mix of "watchdog" and "lapdog," while 1 (3.3%) labeled it purely a "lapdog." This nuanced view reflects a media struggling to balance its roles.

### Interpretation

The data reveals a paradox: ICT is both a boon and a bane for Indian journalism. Students recognize its transformative potential, with 80% affirming its role in skill development and 73.3% linking it to competitiveness. However, the lack of consistent

training (53.3%) and technical expertise (60%) hampers its benefits, reflecting systemic deficiencies in journalism education. Economically, high costs deter equitable access, widening the digital divide among aspiring journalists.

On the flip side, ICT's role in enabling government influence is undeniable. The unanimous agreement (100%) that ICT aligns media with state agendas, coupled with 60% viewing the media as "completely dependent," paints a grim picture of journalistic autonomy. Social media and online platforms, while empowering content creation, also serve as tools for algorithmic manipulation and digital surveillance, reinforcing government narratives. The perception of the media as a "lapdog" (93.3%) rather than a "watchdog" signals a crisis of credibility, driving audiences to alternative platforms like YouTube for unbiased information.

### Findings

The survey data crystallizes ICT's dual functionality in Indian journalism:

1. **Empowerment:** High familiarity (86.7%) and universal agreement (100%) on ICT's necessity underscore its role in modern journalism. Tools like CMS and social media enhance skills (80%) and competitiveness (73.3%), aligning with global trends of digital transformation.
2. **Educational Gaps:** Inconsistent training (53.3%) and technical skill deficits (60%) reveal an education system ill-prepared for an ICT-driven media landscape. High costs (26.7%) further exacerbate inequities, limiting access to cutting-edge tools.
3. **Government Influence:** The perception of media dependency (60%) and narrative prioritization (80%) highlights ICT's role in undermining independence. Its facilitation of state control (100%) through digital platforms signals a shift from democratic accountability to centralized power.

A **SWOT analysis** encapsulates these findings:

- **Strengths:** ICT boosts skills (80%), competitiveness (73.3%), and content dissemination efficiency.
- **Weaknesses:** Technical gaps (60%), high costs (26.7%), and inadequate training (53.3%) hinder its potential.
- **Opportunities:** Enhanced training and access could foster independent journalism and counter influence.
- **Threats:** ICT's role in aligning media with government agendas (100%) threatens its democratic function.

## Conclusions

ICT in Indian journalism is a double-edged sword. It empowers journalists with tools to thrive in a digital age, yet it enables government control, eroding media autonomy. Students acknowledge its revolutionary potential, but educational shortcomings—poor training, technical deficits, and high costs—limit its benefits. Simultaneously, ICT's facilitation of state influence, as perceived by all respondents, reflects a media landscape more attuned to power than public interest. The Indian media's shift from watchdog to lapdog, amplified by digital tools, underscores a pressing need for reform.

## Suggestions

1. **Curriculum Reform:** Journalism programs must prioritize ICT training, integrating hands-on courses in data analytics, CMS, and multimedia production to bridge skill gaps.
2. **Affordable Access:** Subsidies or institutional partnerships with tech firms could reduce costs, ensuring equitable access to ICT tools.
3. **Policy Safeguards:** Regulatory frameworks should protect media independence, curbing government influence over digital platforms and advertising revenues.
4. **Public Awareness:** Campaigns to educate audiences about media biases could encourage reliance on diverse, independent sources.

5. **Further Research:** Larger-scale studies could validate these findings and explore rural-urban disparities in ICT adoption.

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