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Article:	Twitter (X) and Journalistic Practices: A Case Study of Pakistani Journalists
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ABSTRACT

The use of social media websites in journalism has become routine in news media organizations. Social media not only provide a platform for social interaction but also become a significant tool to obtain information. Considering the importance of social media this quantitative study delved into investigating the impact of Twitter, currently known as X on journalistic practices in Pakistan. The main objective of the study was to find out the impact of Twitter (X) on news gathering and dissemination in Pakistan. Researchers employed a survey to collect data from 300 working journalists registered with the National Press Club Islamabad, Pakistan. The major findings of the study revealed that the majority of journalists in Pakistan use Twitter (X) for their day-to-day news-related tasks and there is a positive relationship between the use of Twitter (X) by the journalists and news sourcing and dissemination. The findings shed light on the important role of social media, particularly Twitter(X) in changing contemporary journalism in Pakistan.

Keywords: Twitter (X), Journalistic practices, news sourcing, news dissemination

1. Introduction

Digital platforms, specifically social media websites play a vibrant part in the process of news production in news organizations by journalists. Among all, the use of Twitter (X) has become common in the news process (Rodriguez et al., 2018). In Pakistan, almost every journalist has a Twitter (X) account because this medium is considered more convenient, cheap, and accessible as compared to traditional channels of communication. Twitter (X) not only functions as an opportunity for sourcing information when notables including politicians or important public institutions and ministries share information in the form of press releases and updates related to different issues of public concern on their Twitter (X) accounts, along with this, journalists also share news updates through their Twitter (X) accounts (Arif et al., 2020). Similar to other countries, the practices of journalism in Pakistan have changed by social media and social media has become a market for news stories gathering and dissemination (Ali & Khan, 2021).

Social media websites are used in many ways for the production of news, like news gathering, sources of news, verification of information, presentation of the stories, dissemination of information, and interaction with the audience (Gulyas, 2013; Gulyas, 2016; Olausson, 2016). The popularization of social media websites in the current digital age resulted in more channels of information for journalists but massive archives of information on social media make the process of information sourcing and verification more challenging. The evolution of the digital environment in the newsroom is still a challenge for journalists, after more than 20 years of the entrance of the internet in the newsroom. For the time being, social media platforms have emerged and increased in number in recent years (Newman & Fletcher, 2009).

The internet and particularly social media have a vivid impact on journalism (Sarrica, 2010; Deuze, 2007). The traditional practices used in the past regarding news gathering, news sourcing, and verification are changing (Burno, 2011) and with these changing trends, the journalism profession is transforming fundamentally. In the age of digital technologies, audiences can consume the news at any hour, anywhere by using any digital device. This has become the basis of the digital transformation of news organizations. In the particular case of social media, mobile phone technology shapes the news consumption patterns of the young generation (Boczkowski, 2017). In the adoption of this trend, journalists have to work beyond traditional journalism in their daily routines (Deuze & Witchge, 2018) and started using social media websites regularly for news gathering hence, this process has increased from 4% to 24 percent in years 2008 and 2013 respectively (Van et al., 2015).

Journalists use social media for various purposes such as to seek out new audiences, interact with sources, verification of information (Weller, 2014), and support their news coverage (Molyneux, 2018). As per Zhang and Li (2020), the increased use of social media for verification and sourcing of information become common. However, social media possibly replace the pre-available traditional channels or facilitates as supplementary to the traditional sources. They argued that social media platforms have replaced the old-fashioned channels of sourcing.

Twitter (X) has become a useful tool for news gathering. Users can share the updates with their followers by quickly tweeting about the events as soon as they occur. This has enabled news organizations and journalists to provide updates to their audiences in real-time and break

news as soon as they can. For example, when a gunman opened fire in a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019, the first reports came from the platforms of social media like Twitter (X), and victims and witnesses kept posting updates about the situation (BBC, 2019).

Twitter (X) is a great tool for following developing stories. Users keep sharing new information and updates with the unfolding of events and provide a constant stream of updates regarding the situation. While information gathering regarding various issues, journalists use these updates obtained from Twitter (X) and this helps in developing news stories. There are many incidents where Twitter (X) was found to be an important tool for breaking news, such as at the time of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden by American forces, that event was reported in the form of a Tweet by an IT consultant in Pakistan and he consistently provided updates regarding that ongoing event (Riedel, 2013).

In the ongoing digital age, it has become an important requirement for journalists to utilize Twitter (X) actively for posting Tweets and sharing news and opinions with the audience at large. This practice would not only be helpful for professional journalists to perform their journalistic tasks but also it will help them to increase their followers. The use of hashtag is another important tool that can help journalists to stay up-to-date with current affairs. Overall, Twitter (X) is a helpful platform for journalists and it also increases their professional efficiency (Khan et al., 2019).

Currently, social media has become important as argued by Memon and Umrani (2019), the use of social media has become an integral part of journalistic life of journalists. They reported, in Pakistan journalists are adopting Facebook and Twitter (X) as these social media facilitate them in information gathering. Journalists in Pakistan use these websites to build connections with news sources and these sources provide exclusive information with them which help them to build news stories.

In the age of digital media, Twitter (X) has become a reason for the transformation of the news media environment, and Twitter (X) is now a vital space of important news sources and information. As argued by Qaisar and Riaz (2020), the way people within the industry of media and journalists use Twitter (X) holds importance. The emergence of Twitter (X) in the community of journalists has increased its importance because people in association with the industry of news use this platform to share exclusive stories and make comments on the Twitter (X) posts of fellows, politicians, and other influential people.

By keeping in view, the important role of Twitter (X) and its use by journalists i.e., associated journalists, various studies argued that, on one side Twitter (X) has transformed the environment of the newsroom from traditional to digital practices and on another side, it facilitates journalistic routine of news processing. Moreover, as the literature shows Twitter (X) is an open and convenient platform for news journalists for day-to-day job-related practices. So, it was empirically and theoretically important to examine and understand how and to what extent the social media platform i.e., Twitter (X) is used in the field of journalism, specifically in sourcing and dissemination of news by Pakistani journalists.

2. Literature Review

The literature has documented the utilization of various social media platforms as sources of information, like Wikipedia (Messner & South, 2011), and Twitter (X) (Ahmad, 2014; Graham, 2013). According to a survey conducted on American journalists, the majority of the

journalists increasingly adopted social media websites, such as Twitter (X) for information gathering (Weaver & Willnat, 2016).

The scholars Cremedas et al., (2012) conducted a national-level survey of news journalists working on 129 television channels in America and found that nearly half of the television channels have started using Facebook and Twitter (X) to gather information. The findings of another study based on a survey of 105 chief editors in newsrooms in Germany, found that Blogs, Facebook, Twitter (X) Google+, and YouTube, (X) are the most popular platforms for seeking ideas for news stories (Neuberger & Langenohl, 2019).

Social media is also used in various aspects of the production of news, like ideas seeking for news stories, news sourcing, verification of the information, distribution of content after post-production, promotion of the content, and engagement with the audience (Gulyas, 2013). In the current digital age, the wide spread of social media resulted in more channels of information for journalists but these massive platforms of information make verification of the information more challenging. On the other side, social media has now become a significant source of information with timeliness for journalists, especially at times when they find it difficult to access updated sites on information, like at times of conflict and crises or at times of breaking news (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017).

Social media platforms are also believed as a channel for journalists to go through the privacy of newsworthy personalities such as celebrities, politicians, and sportsmen (Hermida, 2010) and journalists use quoted information from news stories available on social media (Graham, 2013). Celebrities and politicians are commonly considered as news sources. They frequently use social media to post their status which may be used as information for quoted news stories for instance, Twitter (X) is viewed as a more convenient and regularly used media for journalists since politicians and prominent personalities use Twitter (X) for political campaigns and their self-promotion (Broersma & Graham, 2012). When social media is utilized in with various other traditional types of news sources, it becomes theoretically as well as empirically important to manage how social media is positioned amongst further traditional channels (Wardle et al., 2014).

In recent times, Pakistani culture has altered because of the betterment of interactive technologies. Acquiring digital information has become easier for the people of Pakistan. Through Twitter (X), journalists have been provided with new opportunities to keep themselves updated about current situations, events, and happenings and now they have built productive relationships and partnerships with their audiences. Because of Twitter (X), these Pakistani journalists have boosted exposure among their followers as they voice their ideas and opinions. This has also boosted the reputation of these journalists (Shah et al., 2022).

Literature highlights that social media is commonly used by journalists around the world. Zulqarnain et al. (2020) noted that due to the increased use of social media, new tracks have been opened for Pakistani traditional journalism and they found rapid acceptance of social media in Pakistan. They argued that social media has become a vital tool of news gathering in Pakistan.

2.1.1 Research Questions

In light of the existing literature, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. How frequently do Pakistani journalists use Twitter (X) for sourcing news?

RQ2. To what extent do Pakistani journalists use Twitter (X) for news dissemination?

2.1.2 Hypotheses

To address the research questions, the following hypotheses were articulated:

H1. There is a significant relationship between the usage of Twitter (X) by journalists and their journalistic practices.

H1a. The usage of Twitter (X) by journalists is positively associated with news sourcing.

H1b. The usage of Twitter (X) by journalists is positively associated with news dissemination.

3. Methodology

A quantitative research design was adopted by the researcher for this study. A survey was employed as a tool to collect primary data from the sample drawn from a population of journalists. Research questions pursued answers to comprehensive journalistic practices related to Twitter (X) usage for news sourcing and news dissemination by journalists. The survey in this study was designed to explore the relationship between the use of Twitter (X) and news sourcing and news dissemination. Wimmer and Dominic (2014) stated several plusses of using surveys and some of them applied to the scenario of the current study such as studying patterns in natural settings, its cost-effectiveness, and data collection from a larger number of respondents.

3.1.1 Population

The journalists and editors associated with news media in Rawalpindi and Islamabad comprised the population of this study.

3.1.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

To carry out this study effectively, the scholar adopted the purposive sampling technique. For the survey, the sampling frame comprised the voter list of the National Press Club Islamabad 2022. By using Yamane's formula, the sample size was 300 respondents. Respondents for the quantitative survey were selected by using the purposive sampling technique on condition that they all fulfill certain criteria i.e., respondents must be journalists and active members of National Press Club Islamabad and also users of Twitter (X). The purposive sampling is also known as judgmental sampling. Respondents in the purposive sampling are selected on a well-founded judgment that may achieve the purpose of the study. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that is most significant when a researcher intends to learn a specific domain with experts of relevant area (Tongco, 2007). As this study intends to find the impact of Twitter (X) on journalistic practices, so, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the journalists only who are users of Twitter (X).

The following Yamane's formula was used for the calculation of sample size from the given sampling frame:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

3.1.3 Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire was related to general information and affiliation of the respondents with their media organization, the second part was about the extent to which respondents use Twitter (X), the third section of the questionnaire was about respondents' use of Twitter (X) for journalistic practices i.e., news sourcing and news dissemination. A pre-test was conducted by the researchers by distributing

30 questionnaires to the journalists to record their responses. The data obtained from those questionnaires were entered in SPSS to check the reliability and Cronbach's Alpha was .904 which shows the high reliability of the data.

4. Findings and Discussion

The data collected from 300 respondents revealed a diverse educational background among them. Only 6 (2%) respondents held a PhD, while 63 (21%) had an MS/M Phil., 142 (47%) had MA/M.Sc./BS degrees, followed by BA/B.Sc. and up to FA/F.Sc with 78 (26%) and 11 (3.7%) respondents. The data highlights the educational range within the respondents group which showed most of the respondents were educated with at least one higher studies degree except the respondents fall in the slot of up to FA/F.Sc. Furthermore, the professional characteristics of respondents showed that the majority of respondents 88 (29.3%) were reporters/senior reporters. 78 (26%) respondents were producers/associate producers/assistant producers, followed by 46 (15.3%) assignment editors and 44 (14.7%) editors. There were also 44 (14.7%) respondents from other designations like copy editors, assistant directors, and director news.

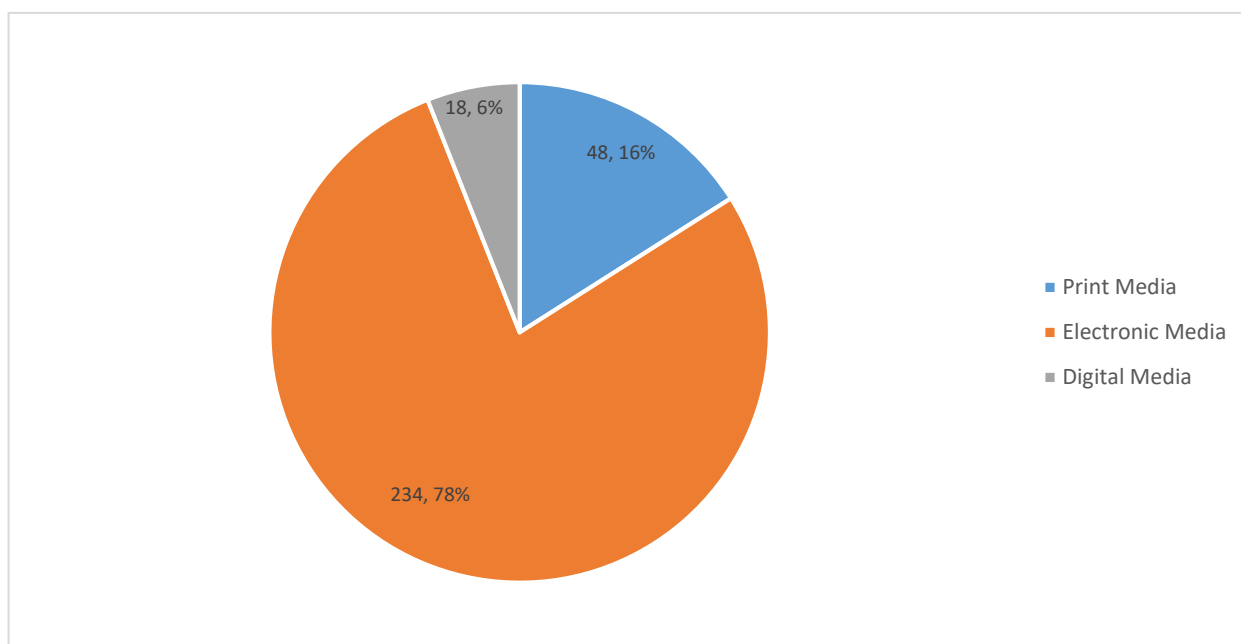


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of journalists' media affiliation

The frequency distribution of media affiliation of journalists, as depicted in Figure 1, reveals a significant concentration in electronic media 234 (78%), followed by print media 48 (16%), and online/digital media 18 (16%). In the current study, this pattern suggests a predominance of electronic among journalists, with a considerable minority of journalists associated with print media and a smaller group engaged in online/digital media platforms. Moreover, the frequency distribution shown in Figure 1 provides a picture of the current media landscape and sheds light on the significance of electronic media in the contemporary field of journalism in Pakistan, from where the data is collected.

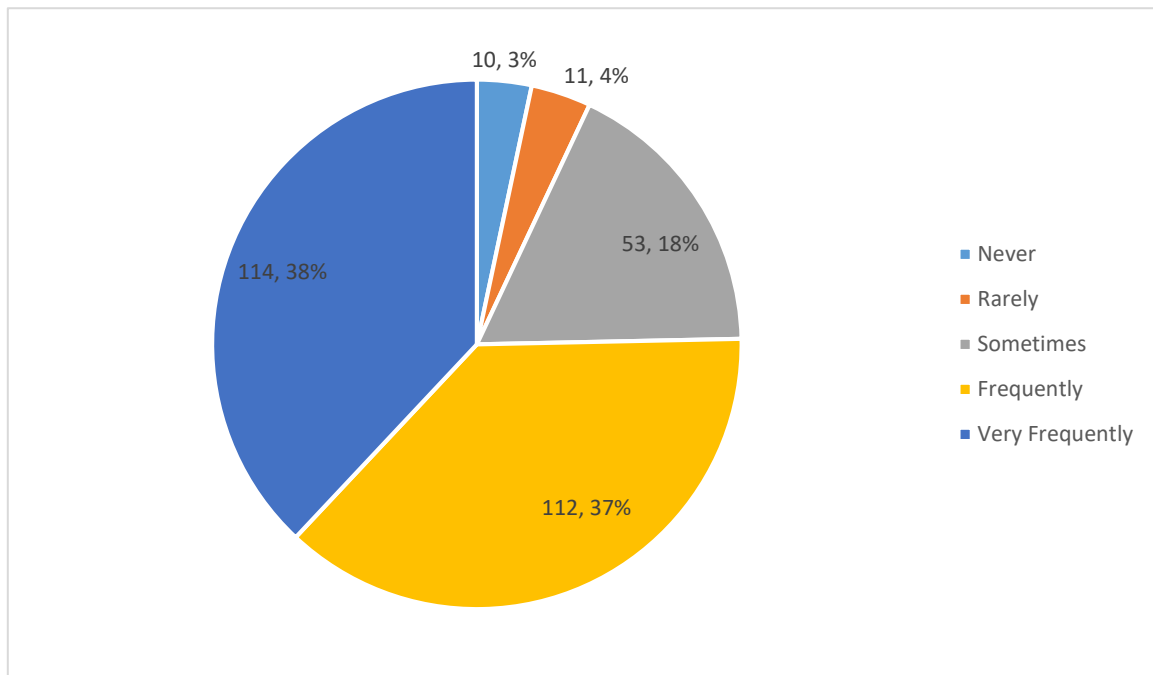


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of journalists' Twitter (X) Usage

The distribution of Twitter (X) usage frequency, as depicted in Figure 2 was assessed on a five-point Likert scale. The data shows that a significant portion of journalists 114 (38%) use Twitter (X) very frequently (daily), closely followed by 112 (37%) journalists who use it frequently (on alternative days), Moreover, 53 (18%) journalists reported using Twitter (X) occasionally (four to five times in a month), while only 11 (4%) journalists use it rarely (a few time a year), and a small number of journalists 10 (3%) have never used Twitter (X). These facts highlight the increasing prominence of social media utilization among journalists within the evolving landscape of media. This trend aligns with broader research findings of the Pew Research Center quoted by Shah et al. (2022) in their research, which indicates that more than 90% of journalists use social media in their journalistic practices. The findings of the current study in the context of Pakistan further underscore this pattern which reveals that the majority of journalists in Pakistan are into Twitter (X) engagement daily or every other day, which reflects a significant dependence on social media for journalistic practices. Moreover, findings shows important role of social media in journalistic practices, as also noted by Shaheen et al. (2020) in their study related to impact of Twitter (X) in journalists' job performance that social media influenced journalistic practices.

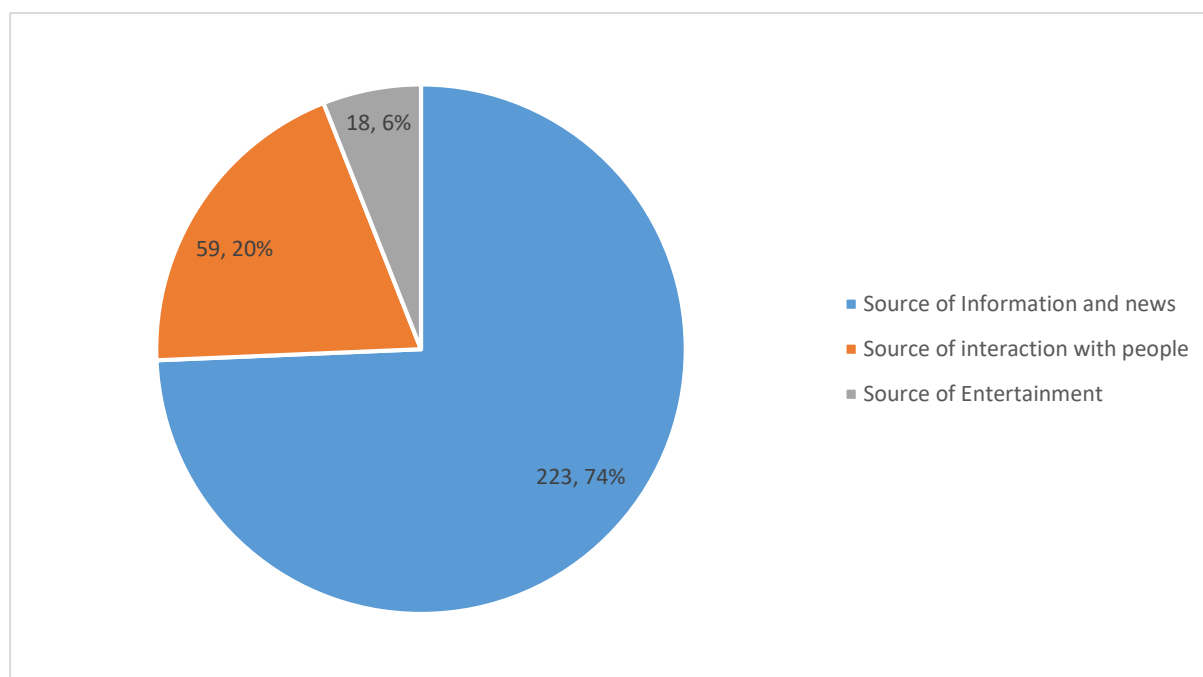


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of Reasons of Twitter (X) Usage

Figure 3 demonstrates the frequency of reasons why journalists in Pakistan use Twitter (X), revealing insightful patterns regarding journalists' engagement with social media. The data points out that a significant majority of journalists 223 (74%) use Twitter (X) mainly as a source for obtaining news and information which highlights a prevalent inclination towards social media for news sourcing within their journalistic practices. This specific finding underlines the key role of Twitter (X) as a key information-gathering tool among journalists in the contemporary media landscape. Moreover, the data demonstrates that a prominent portion of journalists 59 (20%) leverage Twitter (X) as a source interaction, using it to engage with people. This pattern of interaction indicates an additional dimension of journalists' engagement through Twitter (X) showing this platform's role not only as a source of information but also in fostering direct communication and engagement with the audience. In contrast, a small number of journalists 18 (6%) use Twitter (X) for entertainment purposes. This group shows a minority, but their use of Twitter (X) for entertainment purposes highlights the multifaceted nature of social media and how they provide needs beyond the professional practices of journalism. These findings are also aligned with various studies conducted on the social media usage patterns of journalists. Such as those highlighted in a study by Littau and Jahng (2016), that highlights the Twitter (X) engagement of journalists for information processing tasks and interaction with people. The findings of another study underscore the significant role of Twitter (X) in shaping journalistic narratives (Dubois et al, 2020).

Table 1. The Pearson product-moment Correlation Coefficient of Journalists' Twitter (X) Usage and Journalistic Practices.

Variable	Journalistic Practices
Twitter (X) Usage Frequency	.648**
Correlation: ** $p < .01$	

Pearson product-moment correlation test was employed to find the relationship between Twitter (X) usage frequency of journalists and journalistic practices, particularly to test H1. Table 1 illustrates a positive relationship between usage journalists' usage frequency and journalistic practices. The results show that journalistic practices change as the frequency of Twitter (X) usage by journalists increases. This not only validates H1 but signifies the impact of Twitter (X) on journalistic practices. These findings are in line with the findings of Arif et al. (2020), Littau and Jhang (2016), Kapidizic et al. (2022) and Shah et al. (2020) who reported in their studies that Twitter (X) usage by journalists brings notable changes in journalistic practices. Findings of the Observatory Report (2022) also supported the notion that the use of social media and the transformation of traditional journalistic practices are correlated with each other. The major findings also highlighted the way in which social media impacts contemporary journalism

Table 2. The Pearson product-moment Correlation Coefficient of Journalists' Twitter (X) Usage and News Sourcing.

Variable	News Sourcing
Twitter (X) Usage Frequency	.631**

Correlation: ** $p < .01$

The findings of Table 2 shows a positive relationship between use of Twitter (X) by journalists and their practices related to news sourcing. The finding suggests as the frequency of journalists' Twitter (X) usage increases, there is a notable change in their news-sourcing behaviors. This result validates H1a highlighting a significant impact of Twitter (X) engagement on how journalists source news. This result is consistent with the findings of Zhang and Li (2010) who examined the relationship between journalists' use of social media, including Twitter (X) for news sourcing and how journalists use social media for news sourcing. They also argued that as compared to other platforms, Twitter (X) is measured more significant source for news than conventional news media and journalists are more attracted to Twitter (X) to know about public opinion and trace sources. The result is also aligned with another survey-based study incorporating journalists from 14 countries reported that Twitter (X) is used by the majority of journalists (Stadd, 2013).

Table 3. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of Journalists' Twitter Usage and News Dissemination

Variable	News Dissemination
Twitter (X) Usage Frequency	.517**

Correlation: ** $p < .01$

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed in the study to investigate the relationship between Journalists' Twitter (X) usage and news dissemination, to test H1a. Table 3 demonstrates a positive relation between Twitter (X) usage and news dissemination, suggesting that due to increased Twitter (X) usage leads to changes in journalists' news dissemination practices. The finding validates H1a, emphasizing the significant role of Twitter (X) in shaping journalistic practices. The emergence of Twitter (X) as a significant platform for news and information, as underscored by Hermida (2010), and its

role in the dissemination of information regarding major global events, as noted by Lenhard and Fox (2009), aligns with the findings of the current study. The study explored the ways Twitter (X) impacts journalistic performs, specifically news sourcing and dissemination in various media corporations. The current findings are also supported by another research conducted by Seth et al. (2017) underscoring that journalists utilize Twitter (X) for news gathering and dissemination.

5. Conclusion

In light of research findings, it concluded that Pakistani journalists use Twitter (X) regularly in their day-to-day news-related performances. This highlights the news trend of digital journalism in Pakistan as well. Findings demonstrated that the use of Twitter (X) by journalists in Pakistan changed journalistic practices, particularly news sourcing and dissemination. It has become a new normal among journalists to use Twitter (X) to contact exclusive news sources and obtain information that they cannot get through their traditional news sources. This highlights the importance of an alternative platform i.e., Twitter (X) in the contemporary field of journalism which not only provides updated information to journalists but also helps them to disseminate news to a large audience. The study found a positive correlation between Twitter (X) usage and changes in journalistic practices, confirming both hypotheses of the study. Previous researches also resonate with the current study's findings, presenting a holistic view of the impact of social media on Pakistani journalism.

Overall, the current study's findings along with the literature shed light on the notable impact of Twitter (X), specifically on news sourcing and dissemination. Like other countries, journalists in Pakistan use Twitter (X) for their job-related tasks and this platform plays a visible role in defining today's journalistic practices. By presenting inclusive findings, the current study will help journalists and the academic community understand journalism in the fast-paced age of social media.

Further research may be conducted to explore the insights regarding the dynamic role of Twitter (X) in audience engagement, and news verification. Furthermore, the use of Twitter (X) by journalists and ethical considerations may be explored by future researchers in the age of the proliferation of fake news and misinformation and issues related to privacy on social media. This would enhance the understanding of media practitioners and academicians regarding Twitter (X) and its various aspects in journalism.

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