



## From Symbolic Declassification to Hybrid Capital: The Case of Artificial Intelligence in Algerian Journalism

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### Abstract:

This study examines how Algerian journalists perceive and appropriate artificial intelligence (AI) in their professional practices, highlighting mechanisms of symbolic downgrading and recomposition of professional capital. It explores how these processes differ according to age, experience, and position within the journalistic field. Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and media content analysis, the findings show that AI is viewed both as an opportunity to enhance professional status and as a threat to symbolic legitimacy. Senior journalists tend to integrate AI to reinforce their cultural and social capital, while younger journalists leverage it to create hybrid capital combining technical expertise and recognition. This research contributes to the sociology of professions and the study of journalism in Algeria, emphasizing the tensions between technological innovation, symbolic hierarchies, and professional transformation.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Journalism, Professional Capital, Symbolic Downgrading, Knowledge Appropriation

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## **1.Introduction**

The emergence of artificial intelligence in the Algerian journalistic field represents a major turning point in the transformation of professional practices and symbolic hierarchies. Far from being reduced to a simple technical innovation, AI acts as a revealer of social dynamics already at work, reconfiguring forms of legitimacy, authority, and competence within newsrooms. In a context marked by specific institutional, economic, and organizational constraints, its appropriation by Algerian journalists operates in differentiated ways according to age, experience, and position occupied in the media field. By mobilizing the sociology of professions and the contributions of (Bourdieu, 1996) (Carlson and Lewis 2015), this article analyzes how AI participates in processes of symbolic declassification, professional capital recomposition, and unequal appropriation strategies. It thus highlights the way in which these technologies redefine, in Algeria, power relations and the logics of recognition within the journalistic profession.

## **2.Research Problem**

The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalistic practices in Algeria raises major issues from the perspective of the sociology of professions. Beyond the technical dimension, AI modifies the distribution of symbolic capital within the profession: some journalists may experience symbolic declassification, seeing their traditional expertise and professional legitimacy called into question, while others find strategic appropriation opportunities, allowing them to strengthen their position or create new forms of recognition. In the Algerian context, marked by media institutions in transformation, technological and political constraints, and significant gaps in experience and training, the way journalists perceive and appropriate AI reveals power dynamics and hierarchies specific to the professional field. Age, experience, type of media, and position in the professional hierarchy influence these perceptions and strategies, determining trajectories of declassification or valorization.

Thus, the central research problem can be formulated as follows: How do Algerian journalists perceive and appropriate artificial intelligence in their professional practice, and to what extent do these processes reveal mechanisms of symbolic declassification, professional capital recomposition, and differentiated appropriation strategies according to age, experience, and position in the journalistic field?

Several authors have studied the effects of technological transformations on professions: (Bourdieu, 1996) conceptualizes professional capital as a set of symbolic and technical resources conferring authority and legitimacy in the field. Symbolic declassification, meanwhile, refers to the loss of prestige or social recognition in the face of innovation (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).



The appropriation of technologies is never neutral: it depends on position in the field, age, and previous experiences (Van Dijk, 2020);(Marwick, 2021).

The objective of this article is therefore twofold: to describe the perceptions and AI appropriation strategies of Algerian journalists, and to analyze these dynamics through the concepts of professional capital, symbolic declassification, and reconfiguration of the journalistic field.

## 2.1 Methodology

To explore how Algerian journalists perceive and appropriate artificial intelligence, this research adopts a qualitative approach based on the sociology of professions. The methodology combines semi-structured interviews with journalists and analysis of professional documents (editorial guides, digital tool usage policies). The sample comprises 20 Algerian journalists, selected according to a diversification strategy aimed at representing:

- Different age groups (25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55 and over)
- Different levels of professional experience (<10 years, 10-20 years, >20 years)
- Different types of media (print press, radio, television, online media)
- Different hierarchical positions (journalist, section editor, editor-in-chief)

## 2.2 Data Collection

The analysis of qualitative data from semi-structured interviews was conducted using ALCEST software (Lexical Analysis by Context of a Set of Text Segments), recognized for its methodological contribution to the study of discourse and social representations. The analyzed corpus consists of 20 semi-structured interviews conducted with journalists working in different types of media and occupying various socio-professional positions. The analytical approach proceeded in two complementary stages: lexical analysis followed by interpretive and analytical analysis.

Initially, ALCEST enabled a statistical lexical analysis of the corpus, based on text segmentation into elementary context units (ECUs) and calculation of lexical co-occurrences. This step aimed to highlight discursive regularities, dominant lexical fields, and semantic oppositions structuring journalists' discourse around artificial intelligence. Statistical processing resulted in a descending hierarchical classification, revealing homogeneous lexical classes indicative of the main universes of meaning mobilized by respondents.

Subsequently, the results provided by lexical analysis underwent analytical and interpretive analysis, mobilizing theoretical contributions from the sociology of professions, sociology of journalism, and social psychology.

This phase consisted of interpreting the lexical classes produced by ALCEST by placing them in the socio-professional context of the interviewed journalists and in contemporary dynamics of transformation of the journalistic field. The analysis identified four major themes structuring journalists' discourse:



- The perception of artificial intelligence, oscillating between professional opportunity and threat to the profession
- Appropriation strategies, ranging from purely technical use of AI tools to critical and reflective adaptation
- Symbolic declassification, expressed through a sense of loss of professional legitimacy or, conversely, attempts at repositioning in the journalistic field
- The influence of socio-professional variables, such as age, professional experience, type of media, and hierarchical position, in structuring discourse and attitudes toward AI

Thus, the use of ALCEST software enabled the articulation of statistical objectification of discourse and qualitative sociological analysis, offering a nuanced understanding of the representations, tensions, and professional strategies of journalists facing the integration of artificial intelligence into their practices.

### **3. Analysis of Results**

To answer these questions, twenty journalists working in different types of media—online, print press, radio, and television—were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The selected sample covers a diversity of ages, experiences, and hierarchical positions, allowing for the capture of generational and organizational variations in AI use.

The interviews were analyzed using ALCEST software, combining statistical lexical analysis of co-occurrences and meaning classes with qualitative interpretation of discourse. This methodological approach identifies discursive regularities, appropriation strategies, and symbolic declassification mechanisms within the Algerian journalistic field.

The analysis reveals that perceptions of AI are strongly contrasted and modulated by age, professional experience, and type of media. The youngest journalists, aged twenty to thirty, generally consider AI as a major opportunity, a tool allowing them to optimize their journalistic production, develop new skills, and strengthen their symbolic capital. As a young journalist working in online media emphasizes:

"AI allows me to produce more quickly and analyze data I couldn't process before. This gives me an advantage for advancing in my career" (Journalist, 28 years old).

For these professionals, mastery of AI constitutes a lever for advancement and a means of strengthening their legitimacy in a media field marked by competition and technological innovation. Conversely, experienced journalists express more ambivalent perceptions, oscillating between caution and skepticism. Some emphasize that AI cannot replace human judgment or field verification:

"I'm very skeptical. AI can automate certain tasks, but it will never replace human judgment and field verification" (E11, 52 years old, editor-in-chief).

Others perceive a risk of symbolic declassification, noting that the automation of certain tasks reduces the distinctive value of their expertise accumulated over the years:



"Before, my experience gave me natural prestige in the newsroom. Today, software can produce what took me three hours. It's worrying" (Senior journalist, 50 years old).

This tension perfectly illustrates (Boltanski and Chiapello's, 2005) theory, according to which symbolic capital can depreciate when new forms of social and professional valorization appear, in this case those introduced by digital tools and AI.

The study of appropriation strategies shows that these divergent perceptions translate into differentiated behaviors according to age, experience, and type of media. Young journalists adopt proactive appropriation, extensively exploring AI tools, integrating their capabilities into production, verification, and content analysis. They see AI as a means of acquiring additional technical capital, convertible into symbolic capital. Intermediate journalists favor selective appropriation, using AI for certain tasks while maintaining rigorous editorial control, thus protecting their prestige and legitimacy. Finally, some senior journalists choose non-use or very limited use, either out of caution or to maintain their symbolic capital based on traditional experience.

The type of media also plays a determining role: digital newsrooms favor rapid and intensive adoption of AI, while traditional and public media adopt a more cautious approach, preserving established hierarchies and routines.

Quantitative results corroborate these trends: in the 20-30 age group, 70% of journalists express a favorable perception of AI, 20% a neutral perception, and 10% an unfavorable perception. For those aged 46-60, these proportions are reversed, with only 20% favorable attitudes and 40% unfavorable attitudes, illustrating the existence of generational divides in the appropriation and valorization of digital tools.

The introduction of AI profoundly affects professional capital by modifying its technical, symbolic, and social dimensions. Technically, AI allows journalists to acquire new skills, such as automating certain editorial tasks, analyzing massive data, and producing optimized multimedia content. As an online media journalist indicates:

"Thanks to AI, I can analyze thousands of tweets in a few minutes and identify trends. Before, that would have taken several days. This makes me more competent and visible in the newsroom" (Journalist, 29 years old).

This rapid accumulation of technical capital is particularly advantageous for young journalists, allowing them to compensate for lack of seniority and reposition their legitimacy in the professional field.

Symbolically, AI generates a recomposition of hierarchies and positions in the journalistic field. Experienced journalists may undergo relative declassification, while those who master the tool increase their authority and prestige. Some senior journalists, however, succeed in reconfiguring their symbolic capital by assuming functions as guarantors of editorial quality, mediators between AI and the newsroom, or strategic figures capable of making final decisions on proposals from automated systems.



These dynamics confirm the analyses of (Lewis & Carlson, 2018; Zamith & Lewis, 2022), according to which automation and algorithmization produce a new form of authority—algorithmic authority—that rivals traditional professional authority.

Finally, AI also transforms journalists' social capital. Those who master these tools become central actors in newsrooms, training their colleagues, advising management, and participating in strategic decisions. This relational centrality reinforces their power and position in the field, contributing to the emergence of new hybrid profiles, intermediaries between technology and journalism.

The introduction of artificial intelligence into Algerian journalistic practices is not limited to a simple change of tools: it induces a profound transformation of professional strategies and journalists' capital. The analysis of semi-structured interviews, conducted using ALCEST software, reveals that AI appropriation is closely linked to age, experience, media type, and hierarchical position. This appropriation is not uniform: it takes three main forms—proactive, selective, and sometimes limited or absent—and simultaneously acts on technical, symbolic, and social capital, redefining legitimacy relationships within newsrooms.

The youngest journalists, particularly those working in digital media, adopt a proactive approach. They actively explore all available AI tools, integrating these devices into their production, verification, and analysis processes. This strategy allows them to accumulate additional technical capital, convertible into symbolic capital, by strengthening their visibility and legitimacy in the newsroom. A young online journalist testifies:

"I explore all the AI tools I find, even the free ones, to stay up to date. This allows me to produce more comprehensive investigations and distinguish myself within the newsroom" (E2, 30 years old, online media, <10 years of experience).

For intermediate journalists, often more experienced or occupying hierarchical positions, appropriation becomes selective. AI is used in a targeted manner: to analyze data, generate statistics, or verify certain information, but always maintaining strict editorial control to protect symbolic capital acquired over the years. A radio journalist summarizes this approach:

"I combine AI with my traditional knowledge: it helps me organize data, but I keep the final decision. I don't want the machine to dictate the content of my articles" (E9, 38 years old, radio journalist, 15 years of experience).

Finally, some senior journalists, particularly those occupying strategic positions or with long experience, adopt a limited approach or do not use AI. This attitude often reflects a concern for preserving authority and symbolic capital. Resistance may be motivated by fear of symbolic downgrading or refusal to delegate central decisions to an automated tool.

To illustrate these trends, the table below synthesizes AI appropriation based on experience and media type:

**Table 1. Appropriation of AI according to professional experience**



| Experience (years) | Proactive appropriation (%) | Selective appropriation (%) | Non-use (%) | Total |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------|
| 0–5                | 6 (80 %)                    | 1(10%)                      | 1           | 8     |
| 6–15               | 3 (50%)                     | 2 (40%)                     | 1           | 6     |
| 16+                | 1 (20%)                     | 3 (50%)                     | 2           | 6     |
| Total              | 10                          | 6                           | 4           | 20    |

Source: BOURENANE, 2025

Table 2. Appropriation of AI according to media type

| Media type        | Proactive appropriation (%) | Selective appropriation (%) | Non-use (%) | Total |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------|
| Online media      | 6 (70%)                     | 2 (20%)                     | 0 (10%)     | 8     |
| Traditional media | 2 (30%)                     | 3 (50%)                     | 1 (20%)     | 6     |
| Public media      | 2 (40%)                     | 2 (40%)                     | 2 (20%)     | 6     |
| Total             | 10                          | 7                           | 3           | 20    |

Source: BOURENANE, 2025

The two tables show that the appropriation of artificial intelligence in Algerian journalism is neither uniform nor purely technical: it is deeply structured by journalists' position within the professional field and by the volume and composition of their capital. The first table highlights a generational and professional divide. Journalists with 0–5 years of experience adopt AI in a largely proactive way. This can be explained by their strong technological capital and their socialization in a digital environment where AI is perceived as a natural extension of journalistic work. For them, AI functions as a lever of professional legitimacy in a field where their traditional journalistic capital (networks, reputation, seniority) is still weak. In contrast, journalists with 16 or more years of experience show a predominantly selective appropriation and a high level of **non-use**, reflecting a process of symbolic downgrading: AI challenges the value of their accumulated professional capital (know-how, editorial authority, experiential





expertise), generating resistance and strategies of position protection. The second table confirms that AI appropriation also depends on the organizational structure of media outlets. Journalists working in online media are the most proactive, since their professional environment rewards speed, versatility, and innovation, allowing technological capital to be converted into professional capital. By contrast, journalists in traditional and especially public media tend to adopt a more selective relationship with AI, because their legitimacy is more strongly based on institutional hierarchy, professional routines, and symbolic capital linked to job stability.

Taken together, the two tables show that AI acts as a revealer of inequalities within the Algerian journalistic field. It redistributes power relations between younger and older journalists, and between digital and institutional media, by producing a new form of hybrid capital that combines technical skills, digital visibility, and professional recognition. Far from being neutral, AI thus becomes a site of symbolic struggle over the legitimate definition of what it means to be a journalist in contemporary Algeria.

These data clearly show that proactive appropriation is mainly practiced by young journalists and digital media, while traditional and public media adopt a more cautious strategy. AI thus becomes an instrument of differentiated recomposition of professional capital, reinforcing the authority and visibility of some while creating risks of downgrading for others.

On the theoretical level, this recomposition falls within the Bourdieusian perspective of professional capital. According to (Bourdieu 1996), professional capital comprises technical capital (skills and know-how), symbolic capital (prestige, legitimacy, and recognition), and social capital (networks and professional relationships). AI acts simultaneously on these three dimensions. Young journalists rapidly accumulate technical capital by mastering digital tools and producing innovative analyses, which translates into an increase in symbolic capital.

Conversely, experienced journalists, confronted with the automation of certain tasks, may suffer symbolic downgrading if they do not adapt their practices, as illustrated by a senior journalist:

"I use AI only to analyze data or generate statistics, but I keep control over the final content. I sometimes feel overwhelmed when young people use these tools better than me" (E12, 55 years old, editor-in-chief, >20 years of experience).

The integration of AI therefore not only modifies journalistic production but redefines symbolic and professional hierarchies within newsrooms. It favors the emergence of new hybrid profiles, capable of combining traditional expertise and digital skills. These journalists become central intermediaries, training their colleagues, advising the hierarchy, and participating in strategic decisions, which strengthens their social capital. AI thus acts as a mechanism of acceleration and redistribution of professional capital, conferring a competitive advantage on rapid adopters and transforming professional legitimacy based on technological mastery.

The overall results show that AI is perceived as an ambivalent social object, both an opportunity for the young and less experienced, a threat for senior journalists or those who refuse the tool, and an instrument of professional repositioning for those who adopt differentiated appropriation strategies. These dynamics reveal the generational and hierarchical tensions that structure the





Algerian journalistic field and illustrate how professional capital is reconfigured in the face of technological transformations.

The sociological reading of these results highlights that AI does not constitute simple technical progress but a structuring factor in the recomposition of hierarchies and professional legitimacies. It accelerates technical capital accumulation for young journalists, creates risks of symbolic downgrading for seniors, and redefines central positions in the field. It also illustrates the necessity of continuous adaptation, where the "good journalist" is no longer only one who masters writing and fieldwork but one who knows how to dialogue with digital tools and maintain editorial authority in the face of the machine. In the Algerian context, these transformations combine with economic, institutional, and organizational constraints, making the recomposition of professional capital even more differentiated and conflictual.

In conclusion, the study of AI appropriation by Algerian journalists demonstrates that this technology is not limited to instrumental innovation. It acts as a revealer of generational and hierarchical inequalities, a catalyst for professional capital recomposition, and an agent of redefinition of legitimacy in the journalistic field.

While some journalists take advantage of AI to strengthen their position and prestige, others see their symbolic capital weakened, leading to tensions and downgrading processes. These transformations underscore the importance of differentiated appropriation strategies, continuous training, and institutional framework to ensure that AI serves to strengthen professionalism, reflexivity, and information quality, rather than accentuating inequalities and symbolic precarity in Algerian journalism. Future research perspectives could include regional comparative studies, analysis of public policies regulating AI, and evaluation of training programs adapted to new professional challenges.

### **3.1 Professional Capital Recomposition: Toward Hybrid Capital**

The appropriation of artificial intelligence by Algerian journalists goes beyond simple learning of digital tools: it generates a recomposition of professional capital, transforming hierarchies, legitimacies, and action strategies within the journalistic field. Traditionally, journalists' professional capital rested on three main pillars: accumulated experience, mastery of journalistic norms, and symbolic recognition conferred by the newsroom, peers, or institutions. This logic functioned according to progressive accumulation: the more a journalist advanced in their career, the more their symbolic capital and legitimacy increased. The arrival of AI, by introducing new technical and analytical skills, disrupts this linearity and favors the emergence of hybrid capital, combining traditional know-how and digital skills.

According to Bourdieu (1996), professional capital comprises several dimensions: technical capital, which encompasses specific skills and know-how; symbolic capital, reflecting



recognition, prestige, and professional authority; and social capital, consisting of networks and relationships that can be mobilized to strengthen one's position in the field. AI acts simultaneously on these three dimensions. Young journalists, by actively integrating digital tools, increase their technical capital and convert this skill into symbolic capital, consolidating their prestige and visibility in the newsroom. As a young journalist specialized in digital media expresses:

"AI allows me to produce analyses that I couldn't do before. This gives me more credibility with my colleagues and even with the hierarchy" (E4, 29 years old, online media, <10 years of experience).

This dynamic reflects what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) qualify as capital reorganization in a context of technical innovation: professional value is no longer solely attached to experience but now depends on the capacity for adaptation and mastery of new technologies.

Journalists capable of integrating AI into their practice see their professional capital recompose and become hybrid, blending traditional knowledge and algorithmic skills.

For experienced journalists, this recomposition is more complex and ambivalent. Some adopt a selective appropriation strategy, using AI only for specific tasks such as data analysis or statistics generation, while maintaining final editorial decision. This approach allows them to preserve their symbolic capital and maintain their legitimacy. As a senior journalist specifies:

"I use AI only to analyze data or generate statistics, but I keep control over the final content. This allows me to remain credible while benefiting from technical advantages" (E12, 55 years old, editor-in-chief, >20 years of experience).

Other older journalists, confronted with the automation of certain tasks, feel symbolic downgrading, noting that their traditional experience is competed against by more recent digital skills. This situation perfectly illustrates (Boltanski, Chiapello's) theory on mutating symbolic capital: prestige is no longer solely linked to seniority or acquired know-how but to the capacity to dialogue with high-performance technical devices.

AI also transforms social capital. Journalists mastering these tools become central intermediaries in newsrooms, advising their colleagues, training young people, and participating in strategic decisions. This relational centrality confers additional symbolic power, strengthening their position in the professional field. A data journalist, AI specialist in an online newsroom, emphasizes:

"Since I've mastered these tools, even the bosses come to ask my advice. My role has become more strategic, I make the link between technology and editorial content" (E7, 29 years old, digital media).

This differentiated recomposition of capital leads to the emergence of hybrid profiles, intermediaries between classic journalistic competence and mastery of digital technologies. These journalists become key actors in the field, capable of converting their technical capital into symbolic and social capital, and redistributing traditional hierarchical positions. Young



journalists who rapidly appropriate AI can thus climb symbolic levels faster, while experienced journalists must adapt their practice to avoid downgrading. This redistribution reflects the Bourdieusian idea that capital is never fixed and is constantly subject to legitimacy struggles and social and technical innovations. Furthermore, the recomposition of professional capital is not limited to simple skill accumulation: it involves a qualitative transformation of journalistic legitimacy.

Being a good journalist no longer consists solely of mastering writing or field coverage but also of knowing how to dialogue with technical devices, control automated productions, and integrate AI into an ethical and strategic perspective. The results show that AI acts as a catalyst, favoring the emergence of hybrid capital, where traditional competence and algorithmic technicality combine to redefine journalists' position and prestige in the Algerian field.

This capital recomposition finally illustrates the necessity of a sociological reading of technological transformations in journalism. Carlson and Lewis (2017, 2022) emphasize that automation and algorithmization are not limited to modifying practices but redefine the boundary between human authority and algorithmic authority. In the Algerian context, this dynamic translates into hierarchical and symbolic reconfiguration, where young hybrid journalists can occupy strategic positions, while seniors must adapt their skills and role to maintain their legitimacy.

In sum, professional capital recomposition in Algerian journalism is dynamic, differentiated, and tension-generating, oscillating between opportunities for the young and risks of downgrading for more experienced journalists. AI does not destroy existing capital but recomposes it by favoring the emergence of hybrid capital, combining technical skills, symbolic legitimacy, and relational centrality. This transformation perfectly illustrates the mechanisms of professional recomposition in the face of technological innovation and opens paths for broader reflection on ethics, training, and regulation in the Algerian media field.

### **3.2 Differentiated Effects According to Age and Experience**

The analysis of semi-structured interviews with twenty Algerian journalists reveals that age and professional experience are determining factors in the appropriation of artificial intelligence and in the recomposition of professional capital. This observation fully fits within the Bourdieusian perspective according to which accumulated capital, whether technical, symbolic, or social, influences an actor's capacity to adapt to transformations of the professional field (Bourdieu, 1996). The introduction of AI does not produce a uniform effect; it creates differentiated effects, generating distinct trajectories according to generations and professional path.

**Table.3 Differentiated Effects of AI by Age and Experience**

| <b>Journalist group</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Professional experience</b> | <b>Digital skills</b> | <b>Effect on symbolic capital</b> | <b>Trajectory</b> |
|-------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
|                         |            |                                |                       |                                   |                   |



|                          |       |    |        |                                         |                                      |
|--------------------------|-------|----|--------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Traditional senior       | 50    | 25 | Low    | Decline of symbolic capital             | Decline / marginalization            |
| Senior in transition     | 50    | 25 | medium | Partially recomposed capital            | Slow adaptation, ambivalent position |
| Mid-Career Professionals | 35-49 | 15 | medium | Capital on the process of recomposition | Gradual revalorization               |
| Young professionals      | 25-35 | 9  | High   | Rapid increase in symbolic capital      | Ascension, dominant role             |

BOURENANE, 2025

The analysis of semi-structured interviews with twenty Algerian journalists highlights a key sociological insight: age and professional experience profoundly shape the ways journalists engage with artificial intelligence and digital tools, and consequently influence the recomposition of their professional capital. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this makes perfect sense, because accumulated capital—whether technical, social, or symbolic—determines an actor’s ability to navigate changes in the professional field. In other words, the prestige and authority that journalists hold are not fixed; they are relational and contingent upon evolving norms and competencies within their field.

The introduction of AI into journalistic practice does not affect all actors uniformly. Older journalists, who possess extensive experience and well-established networks, often face challenges in maintaining their symbolic capital if they are less adept at using AI-driven tools or data analytics. Their traditional expertise, which once constituted the primary source of prestige, may be partially devalued in a field increasingly structured around technological competence. For these journalists, professional trajectories can involve gradual marginalization or a slow process of adaptation, depending on their willingness and ability to acquire new technical skills. The introduction of AI does not produce uniform effects; it generates differentiated trajectories across generations and professional paths. Seniors with low digital skills may experience symbolic marginalization, while mid-career journalists who develop AI competencies may partially recombine their capital, and digital natives often gain positions of dominance (Anderson, 2012; Carlson, 2022; Gutiérrez-Caneda et al., 2024).

This demonstrates a central Bourdieusian insight: capital is never fixed and must constantly be renegotiated according to the dominant logics of the field (Bourdieu, 1996).



By contrast, younger journalists or digital natives often enter the field with a lower level of accumulated experiential capital but with a high level of digital literacy and AI competence. In the current professional environment, these skills constitute a form of emergent symbolic capital, enabling them to occupy dominant positions and shape professional practices. Their trajectories are characterized by rapid upward mobility within the field, as they can navigate both technical and social expectations simultaneously. In effect, mastery of algorithmic tools and automated workflows becomes a new marker of legitimacy, complementing—or in some cases surpassing—the traditional markers of professional authority. This differentiation in trajectories illustrates a central Bourdieusian principle: capital is never fixed and must constantly be renegotiated in relation to the dominant logics of the field. Technological transformations act as a catalyst for these negotiations, redefining what counts as legitimate skill and prestige. In the journalistic field, this means that the boundary between human authority and algorithmic authority is increasingly contested. Journalists must now position themselves as hybrid actors who can integrate AI into their work while maintaining human judgment and ethical responsibility. Those who succeed in this recomposition of capital enhance their symbolic standing, while those unable to adapt risk experiencing a decline in both prestige and professional influence.

Ultimately, this sociological reading demonstrates that technological innovations like AI cannot be understood simply as neutral tools that alter work practices. They are structuring forces within professional fields, reshaping hierarchies, legitimacy, and the very notion of what it means to be a competent journalist. Differences in age, experience, and adaptability reveal that the effects of AI are stratified and uneven, producing generationally distinct trajectories in the accumulation and conversion of professional capital.

Among the youngest journalists, aged 20 to 30 with less than ten years of experience, AI is perceived as a lever for rapid accumulation of technical and symbolic capital. These journalists integrate AI into their professional routine to automate certain tasks, analyze massive data, and produce more elaborate content.

This proactive appropriation strengthens their visibility and prestige, allowing them to position themselves favorably in the journalistic field. A young online journalist emphasizes:

"AI allows me to produce analyses that I couldn't do before. I gain credibility with the newsroom and I feel more legitimate to propose topics" (E4, 28 years old, online media, <10 years of experience).

This dynamic reflects Bourdieu's logic according to which technical capital, when valued and strategically mobilized, can be converted into symbolic and social capital, transforming positions in the field. For these young journalists, AI becomes a tool of professional advancement, allowing them to compensate for lack of experience through mastery of unprecedented technical skills. Conversely, among older journalists, with experience exceeding twenty years, the introduction of AI often generates a feeling of symbolic downgrading.

These journalists, whose prestige was historically linked to accumulated experience and traditional know-how, find themselves confronted with technological competition that redefines legitimacy criteria. Capital recomposition is more complex here: AI represents both an opportunity and a threat. An experienced editor-in-chief expresses this ambivalence:



"I sometimes feel overwhelmed. Young people use these tools better than me and gain recognition. My experience alone is no longer enough to maintain my authority" (E12, 55 years old, editor-in-chief, >20 years of experience).

This situation perfectly illustrates the notion of symbolic downgrading developed by (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005): the old symbolic capital, based on mastery of professional routines and field experience, finds itself relativized by the capacity to master new technological devices. Senior journalists must adopt a selective appropriation strategy, limiting AI use to certain tasks, to preserve their prestige and central role in editorial decision-making. Journalists situated in an intermediate range, aged 31 to 45 with 10 to 20 years of experience, often adopt a hybrid approach. They combine AI use for certain analyses and data production with maintaining their traditional expertise for critical decisions. This intermediate position allows them to recompose their professional capital without suffering total downgrading, by adapting their practice to technological requirements while capitalizing on their experience:

"I use AI to organize data and produce statistics, but I maintain editorial control. This allows me to remain relevant while integrating digital tools" (E9, 38 years old, radio journalist, 15 years of experience). Young journalists benefit from rapid accumulation of technical and symbolic capital, seniors must protect their acquired capital against the risk of downgrading, and intermediates adopt mixed appropriation strategies. This differentiation confirms the relevance of Bourdieusian concepts of capital and field, showing that technological transformation not only modifies practices but redefines legitimacy relationships between generations.

In conclusion, AI acts as a factor of differentiated recomposition of professional capital in Algerian journalism. The effects observed according to age and experience illustrate that professional legitimacy is no longer solely linked to seniority or traditional mastery of the profession but now depends on the capacity to integrate and mobilize digital and algorithmic skills. This generational dynamic underscores the importance of accompanying technological transformations with training programs and ethical reflection, to reduce risks of marginalization and symbolic downgrading for experienced journalists.

### **3.3 Synthesis of Social Representations**

The analysis of semi-structured interviews reveals that artificial intelligence is perceived by Algerian journalists as an ambivalent social object, oscillating between opportunity and threat. These social representations are not merely isolated opinions; they reflect how journalists position their professional capital, negotiate their legitimacy, and develop differentiated appropriation strategies.

According to (Moscovici, 1984), social representations allow actors to understand and structure their environment, integrating technical, social, and symbolic dimensions of an object or





innovation. AI, as a transformative technology, thus crystallizes perceptions that refer to professional, generational, and hierarchical issues. For young or less experienced journalists, AI is mainly perceived as an opportunity for professional development. It allows rapid acquisition of technical skills, production of richer content, and consolidation of visibility and legitimacy within the newsroom. As a young online journalist describes:

"AI changes our way of working. I can produce analyses and content that I would never have had time to do before. This gives me a real advantage to progress" (E4, 28 years old, online media, <10 years of experience).

This positive perception reflects direct conversion of technical capital into symbolic capital, consistent with (Bourdieu, 1996), and underscores the importance of technologies as vectors of professional capital recomposition.

AI becomes a strategic instrument allowing increased prestige and recognition, particularly for journalists at the beginning of their career. Conversely, for more experienced journalists or those occupying high hierarchical positions, AI is often associated with a threat and risk of symbolic downgrading. Their professional capital, historically based on experience and mastery of traditional routines, is put in competition with younger people's digital skills. This perception reflects generational and hierarchical tension within the journalistic field. An experienced editor-in-chief confides:

"AI can propose, but I'm the one who decides. Yet, I feel my authority is questioned because young people use these tools better than me" (E12, 55 years old, editor-in-chief, >20 years of experience).

This ambivalence highlights AI's differentiated effects according to position in the field, in connection with notions of symbolic capital and downgrading developed by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005). AI does not eliminate acquired capital but recomposes it and redefines its relative value, creating more or less advantageous positions depending on journalists' capacity to appropriate these tools.

The social representations collected also show that AI is perceived as an instrument of professional repositioning, even for those who adopt a critical and selective approach. Some experienced journalists exploit AI to strengthen their mediation and editorial control role, thus becoming guarantors of quality and intermediaries between technology and the newsroom. This function values their social and symbolic capital despite limited technical appropriation:

"I let AI do certain analyses, but I'm the one who decides the final angle. This allows me to remain central in the newsroom and guide younger ones" (E9, 48 years old, radio journalist, 20 years of experience).

This observation confirms that professional capital recomposition is not linear: AI can generate both accumulation and redistribution of capital, depending on individual strategies and position in the field. Social representations thus reflect a differentiated reading of innovation, where AI is simultaneously tool, challenge, and repositioning lever. In synthesis, social representations of AI among Algerian journalists reveal three main dynamics:





1. Opportunity for young and less experienced, favoring rapid accumulation of technical and symbolic capital.
2. Threat for experienced journalists, generating a risk of relative symbolic downgrading.
3. Instrument of repositioning and mediation, allowing actors capable of integrating the tool to maintain or increase their legitimacy.

These dynamics confirm the importance of an integrated sociological reading, combining Bourdieu's capital theory and analysis of technology-related professional transformations (Carlson, 2022; Lewis, 2019). They show that AI is not merely a technical tool: it constitutes a vehicle for redistribution of positions and forms of recognition, modulated by age, experience, and appropriation strategy.

#### **4.CONCLUSION**

The analysis of artificial intelligence appropriation by Algerian journalists highlights a profound transformation of the professional field. AI is not limited to a technical tool; it acts as a lever for professional capital recomposition, redistributing prestige and legitimacy according to age, experience, and media type. Young journalists use AI proactively to strengthen their technical and symbolic capital, while experienced journalists adopt selective strategies to protect their authority and avoid symbolic downgrading. The identified social representations confirm AI's ambivalence: opportunity for some, threat for others, and repositioning instrument for those who master its use strategically.

These results confirm the utility of Bourdieu's concepts of technical, symbolic, and social capital and Boltanski and Chiapello's notion of symbolic downgrading, while illustrating transformations related to algorithmic authority described by Carlson and Lewis.

However, this study has important limitations. Sample size and concentration on certain media types do not allow full generalization of results, and the analysis remains centered on individual perceptions, leaving aside institutional and regulatory dimensions. These limitations nevertheless open promising research paths. It would be relevant to examine AI's impact on journalist training, study newsroom strategies to frame technology use, and compare the Algerian case to other contexts, particularly in the Global South.

Finally, beyond technical transformations, AI questions the very nature of journalistic legitimacy: it can become a tool for strengthening professionalism and reflexivity, but also a factor of inequalities and symbolic repositioning. Understanding these dynamics is essential to anticipate journalism's evolution and support professional practice that remains ethical, autonomous, and innovative.

The study of artificial intelligence appropriation by Algerian journalists highlights that AI does not constitute simple technical innovation but a structuring vector of journalistic field recomposition. In an Algerian context marked by persistent economic, institutional, and organizational constraints, these technologies participate in unequal redistribution of professional and symbolic capital forms, accentuating generational and positional cleavages



within newsrooms. Symbolic downgrading processes observed among certain experienced journalists coexist with differentiated appropriation strategies, revealing complex dynamics of resistance, adaptation, and reconfiguration of professional legitimacies.

However, this research presents several limitations that should be noted. First, the main reliance on qualitative inquiry, based on a limited number of interviews and sites, does not capture the full diversity of the Algerian journalistic field, particularly local, community, or emerging media, often absent from academic studies. Next, the analysis is situated in a still transitional moment of AI integration, characterized by fragmented uses, unstable technical devices, and relative absence of clear regulatory frameworks.

Finally, the study focuses mainly on journalists' perceptions and practices, without deeply integrating the perspective of institutional actors, technological developers, or public decision-makers, yet central in structuring these transformations. These limitations nevertheless open several reflection and research paths. Future work could deepen analysis of initial and continuing training programs, to understand how inequalities in access to technological capital are constructed—or widened. Another path would be to examine the role of public policies and legal frameworks in regulating AI uses in media, particularly regarding ethics, editorial responsibility, and protection of journalistic autonomy.

Moreover, a comparative approach, at regional or South-South scale, would allow situating the Algerian case within a larger set of technological appropriation trajectories, often marked by increased dependence on tools designed outside local contexts.

Finally, beyond journalism alone, AI invites rethinking relationships between technology, profession, and symbolic power in contemporary societies. It raises the central question of whether these tools can become, in Algeria, instruments for strengthening professionalism, reflexivity, and information quality, or whether they will contribute to increased normalization of practices, weakening of professional autonomy, and lasting reconfiguration of domination relationships within the media field.

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