

Research on Privacy Ethics and Media Responsibility Reconstruction in the Age of Intelligent Communication From the Perspective of the Evolution of Journalism and Communication Ethics

Ting Huang¹, Honglei Zhai²

^{1,2} Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, China

ABSTRACT

The rapid iteration of intelligent technology is deeply reshaping the ecological landscape of news communication. Artificial intelligence has evolved from a tool for enhancing efficiency to an architectural force that reshapes the media ecosystem, systematically changing the content production chain and the structure of communication power. While technology empowers the improvement of communication efficiency, structural contradictions such as the generative information privacy gap, the dissolution of privacy boundaries, and the solidification of algorithmic bias have become increasingly prominent, posing severe challenges to the traditional news ethics system. From the intersectional perspective of news communication ethics and digital ethics, this paper systematically analyzes the ethical crises faced by data privacy in the intelligent media environment, such as "having privacy without secrecy". It explores the generation mechanism of ethical dilemmas from four dimensions: the limitations of traditional ethical norms, the expansion of technological rationality, the penetration of capital logic, and the ambiguity of responsibility subjects. Finally, this paper proposes countermeasures such as returning to the core of humanism, building an ethical responsibility community, embedding algorithmic value orientation, and implementing a graded privacy protection path. The aim is to construct a new framework for privacy protection that adapts to the era of intelligent communication and promotes the benevolent development of media technology.

Keywords: *Intelligent communication, Data privacy, Journalism and communication ethics, Media responsibility, Ethical responsibility community.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The deep integration of artificial intelligence and big data algorithms is driving a profound paradigm shift in the field of journalism and communication. Artificial intelligence technology has brought many conveniences to human life, but it has also exacerbated the risk of human privacy infringement. In research on issues related to big data ethics, privacy ethics and data security have become key research focuses. Faced with the privacy dilemma brought by artificial intelligence, how to govern it and what responsibilities the media should bear in governance have become the

current social focus. While intelligent communication improves the accuracy of information matching, it also fundamentally reconstructs the power relations in communication activities, triggering deep conflicts between ethical norms disorder and governance system dysfunction.

Currently, data, algorithms, and computing power have become crucial components in the development of artificial intelligence technology, and they also constitute the main thread in exploring the governance of AI privacy dilemmas. In an intelligent ecosystem where data is the core element, platform enterprises have achieved control over user data through their technological

advantages. When users enjoy convenient services, they often implicitly relinquish their personal privacy. Predictive analysis technology based on multimodal large models enhances the machine's ability to manipulate individuals, leading to a widening gap between what individuals should enjoy in terms of information privacy and what they actually do. Lengthy service agreements and unnecessary requests for permissions make it difficult to implement the principle of informed consent in practice. Under this data-driven logic, individuals face the danger of being deprived of control over their own affairs.

These issues have transcended the mere technical realm and become core topics in the study of journalism and communication ethics. As a crucial component of the social information system, the media bears the responsibility of safeguarding public interests and protecting individual dignity. The data privacy crisis in the era of intelligent communication essentially reflects an imbalance in communication power and a lack of ethical norms. Therefore, from the perspective of journalism and communication ethics, deeply analyzing the logic behind the emergence of privacy risks and reconstructing governance pathways holds significant theoretical and practical importance for promoting the healthy development of the industry.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF ETHICAL MISCONDUCT IN DATA PRIVACY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATION

2.1 Ubiquitous Data Collection and Blurring Privacy Boundaries

The operation of intelligent communication relies heavily on the underlying support of massive data. In order to build detailed user personas and achieve precise push notifications, media platforms often exceed reasonable boundaries in their data collection activities. This collection has evolved from basic device identification to the mining of deep privacy. Through various technical means, platforms are able to penetrate into users' daily lives in all aspects, rendering the traditional dichotomy between public and private spheres ineffective in the face of digital connectivity, and the privacy boundaries are showing a state of dissolution.

From the perspective of news communication ethics, this collection behavior, which is solely

guided by technical efficiency, seriously violates the principle of minimal harm. Information privacy possesses both instrumental and intrinsic value, but under the current collection model, the publicity of information development conflicts fiercely with individuals' right to privacy. When data collection becomes pervasive and imperceptible, users' behaviors in the digital environment are subject to invisible constraints, and this chilling effect weakens the public's will to express freely. Furthermore, ubiquitous collection has transformed privacy from a static right of control into a dynamic risk, making it difficult for users to predict when, where, and how their information will be utilized.

2.2 The Proceduralization of Informed Consent and the Nominalization of Choice Rights

Informed consent is the moral cornerstone of the modern privacy protection framework. However, in the practical scenario of intelligent communication, this principle encounters a serious procedural crisis. One of the causes of privacy ethical risks lies in the limited cognition of both the information technology object and the subject, making it difficult for ordinary users to fully understand the complex rights and obligations relationship in a short period of time. During the installation and use of various software applications, such as payment software and communication software, in order to use the relevant products, users must relinquish some privacy rights and agree to the content authorized by the software, such as "need to access your geographical location", "obtain your avatar picture", "open camera permission", etc. Although these software obtain users' authorization consent in the form of standard terms, thereby reading, collecting, and storing users' information, there is a high risk of excessive collection of users' personal information.

This involuntary and opaque authorization model deeply reflects the imbalance of power structure in the intelligent communication ecosystem. The failure of informed consent often accompanies secondary infringement brought by de-anonymization technology, reflecting the disregard of the disseminator's one-sided values towards the rights of the audience. The transformation of the communication contract from a two-way agreement to a one-way notification further exacerbates the ethical risk of privacy leakage. If informed consent is merely reflected in users' mechanical clicking on agreements, its

function as a safeguard for individual autonomy and digital dignity will be completely lost, turning it into a compliant shell for platforms to evade ethical accountability.

2.3 The Commoditization of Data Value and the Weakening of Media Publicity

Driven by the logic of commercial capital, the instrumental value of data is infinitely magnified, and personal information is thoroughly commoditized in the dissemination chain. The alienation of value and the generalization of entertainment under the control of media capital have led to communication activities deviating from the ethical obligation to inherit human civilization. In pursuit of maximizing short-term economic benefits, some media platforms excessively process data and even share it illegally without obtaining secondary authorization, rendering individuals' digital characteristics subservient to capital appreciation.

This phenomenon greatly erodes the public nature of the media. The purpose of media ethics is to foster a sincere, kind, and beautiful atmosphere among the public and to uphold the trust in social morality. When platforms prioritize economic benefits and infringe on users' privacy to obtain more data to promote development, they undermine the foundation of mutual trust between the media and society. Such a value orientation makes the media no longer an impartial information transmitter, but a shrewd data harvester. If the behavior of communication shifts from serving society to purely pursuing profits, it will destroy the credibility of the media.

2.4 The Normalization of Algorithmic Tracking and the Dissolution of Audience Subjectivity

The algorithm system's real-time tracking of users and comprehensive data analysis form a digital panoramic surveillance space. This uninterrupted technological gaze can lead to a privacy alienation in ontology, a cognitive objectification in epistemology, and a behavioral submission in praxis. Moreover, algorithms not only determine what kind of information people can access, but also subtly influence human cognition.

From an ethical perspective, frequent tracking can greatly impact the autonomy of the audience. The audience, who were originally active participants, have been reduced to objects judged

and controlled by algorithms, which to some extent weakens their critical thinking ability. The uniqueness and diversity of individuals are continuously reduced due to standardization and modeling processes, causing news dissemination to deviate from the moral concept of human-centeredness. If the audience merely exists as data points supporting the operation of algorithms, then the claim that news reporting should have humanistic care becomes hollow.

3. THE DEEP GENERATIVE MECHANISM OF THE ETHICAL DILEMMA OF PRIVACY IN INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATION

3.1 The Lagging Nature and Adaptability Dilemma of Traditional Ethical Norms

Traditional journalism ethics primarily target professional journalists. However, in the era of intelligence, technological forces represented by artificial intelligence have disrupted the original mode of communication, and current ethical norms do not provide clear regulations for algorithm operation and data flow.

There has been ongoing debate regarding the definition of privacy. When confronted with issues of group privacy infringement, the traditional theory of access control appears powerless. This is because the pace of technological advancement far outpaces the speed of rule-making, leaving a significant gap in the law concerning the collection and utilization of personal privacy. The absence of corresponding regulations not only complicates the identification of responsible parties but also undermines the effectiveness of supervision. When intelligent technology is integrated into the information production process, an ecological ethics that takes technological factors into account is needed to address these issues.

3.2 Suppression of Value Rationality by Instrumental Rationality

Intelligent communication technology is efficiency-oriented, utilizing precise calculations to achieve optimal allocation of information dissemination. In the context of technological governance, instrumental rationality prevails while neglecting value rationality, resulting in the marginalization of issues such as privacy protection.

Focusing on technical efficiency can easily make humanistic care a cost burden.

Such an imbalance leads to a lack of necessary ethical pre-review during the initial stages of technological research and development. Given that information technology entities generally have their own one-sided value orientations, the design of technology is highly prone to infringing upon human rights. The development of instrumental rationality obscures the moral issues inherent in technology, gradually depriving the communication process of its due humanistic care. Under the principle of solely emphasizing efficiency, it is difficult to fully safeguard personal privacy and human dignity.

3.3 The Deep Penetration of Capital Logic into the Field of Communication

Media platforms possess both commercial and social public nature in the era of intelligent communication. However, due to the influence of capital, these two natures are often imbalanced. While rights and power are being reshaped to address ethical dilemmas, they have become tools for capital to gain data sovereignty. In the fierce competition, platforms will utilize various methods to obtain users' personal information as much as possible.

After the influx of capital, the social responsibility of the media has been continuously weakened in the face of commercial interests. In today's society, the media faces the question of how to communicate and what content to convey. However, in this process, capital has made values seem false and exaggerated. This has led to increasingly serious violations of personal privacy. Without strict external enforcement, the media's greedy nature will constantly cross moral boundaries. If the public nature of the media is replaced by narrow profit motives, then the entire communication field will become a mere data harvesting ground.

3.4 The Blurring of Responsibility Entities and the Absence of Collaborative Supervision

The intelligent communication system is a vast system composed of multiple participants, leading to unclear boundaries of responsibility. At the same time, the absence of an ethical responsibility community integrating government, scientists, enterprises, and media has resulted in fragmented

governance. Platform enterprises often shirk their responsibilities on the grounds of technological neutrality.

In this situation, a "black box" of responsibility that is difficult to penetrate will emerge. The current regulatory model needs to shift from single governance to a comprehensive governance approach combining heteronomy, technocracy, and autonomy. Moreover, the current self-restraint of the industry is generally limited to principled regulations, lacking specific and enforceable punishment measures. The absence of responsible parties and insufficient collaborative regulatory forces are also reasons for regulatory failure.

4. RECONSTRUCTION AND GOVERNANCE PATH OF PRIVACY ETHICS IN THE ERA OF INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATION

4.1 Returning to the Core of Humanistic Ethics and Reshaping the Value System

The primary task in addressing the privacy dilemma lies in re-establishing the people-oriented core value. Media professionals should uphold their moral conscience, strengthen their sense of responsibility and accountability, and supervise media practitioners to comply with relevant industry standards and technical processes for the application of big data technology, ensuring that data acquisition, processing, and use do not violate legal provisions and ethical norms, and reducing the risk of user privacy data being illegally sold to third parties. It is necessary to reshape the value system requires media practitioners to transcend mere technological worship, embed respect for life emotions and the living world in content distribution and interactive design, and ensure that technological iteration always operates within the ethical orbit of human civilization.

The improved theory of self-affairs control and public domain subject intervention should be introduced to redefine the connotation of privacy rights in the digital era. This means that throughout the entire lifecycle of data processing, a humanistic perspective needs to be incorporated, so that technology is no longer a cold harvesting tool. To rebuild a responsible digital ecosystem, it is necessary to internalize human rights awareness

into the operational logic of algorithms and find ethical balance under the principle of public good.

4.2 Emphasizing the Main Responsibility of the Platform and Implementing a Graded Protection Approach

As the controller of the field, media platforms must first take the primary responsibility for privacy governance. Based on this, they should apply the concept of graded protection according to communication ethics, adopting different protection measures for different types and levels of private information and privacy subjects. The first step is to improve the authorization mechanism and make the terms clear and unambiguous.

The platform should vigorously promote privacy protection design and related supporting mechanisms, integrating ethics into technology development from the very beginning. By establishing an open accountability mechanism, the platform can demonstrate its attitude towards protecting personal information security to the outside world. Shifting from passively complying with regulations to actively taking responsibility, the platform can set a good example in the industry and build a solid security defense line for digital civilization.

4.3 Promoting Benevolence in Algorithms and Strengthening Data Management Contracts

Algorithmic governance is the key to achieving ethical shift. There is a must to promote the establishment of new contracts between online platforms and users regarding data, and adhere to the principle of public good in algorithm applications. There is also a must to vigorously promote research on algorithm transparency and interpretability, so that complex decision-making logic can be subject to social supervision. In the initial design stage of algorithm models, developers should incorporate ethical principles such as fairness, impartiality, and respect for privacy. They should strengthen data management contracts means breaking the dominant clauses unilaterally set by platforms, and restructure the contractual balance between network platforms and users by introducing stakeholder negotiation mechanisms. At the technical level, the platform can purchase or develop new security tools for big data security intelligence, using big data based threat discovery technology for wider range and longer time span

threat analysis, improving the predictability of potential attack threats and strengthening the detection of non-threats, thereby reducing the probability of user privacy data being stolen and adopted by others.

It is necessary to explore the establishment of a personal information protection fund system to provide compensation and governance guarantees for privacy damage caused by issues such as informed consent failure. Through the deep integration of technological means and ethical principles, it can be ensured that the improvement of communication efficiency does not come at the expense of social justice. Technology should become a tool that empowers human communication, rather than an alienating force that erodes individual subjectivity.

4.4 Building a Community of Ethical Responsibility and Enhancing the Efficiency of Collaborative Governance

Privacy protection necessitates the establishment of an ethical responsibility community guided by the government and jointly participated by scientists, enterprises, the media, and the public. In practical operations, each responsible party should recognize their respective responsibilities, strengthen communication and collaboration, and form a cooperative model of mutual trust, mutual understanding, and collaborative governance, allowing each ethical responsibility subject to play its due role in addressing the privacy issues brought about by artificial intelligence. At the macro level, it is necessary to promote the establishment of a framework for collaborative governance involving technology, institutions, and education, leveraging the cohesive role of multiple subjects in achieving value consensus. As a disseminator of public social values, the media can expose, reflect, and trigger widespread attention to various acts of infringing user privacy through reporting, exposing, and criticizing the infringement of user privacy by businesses and enterprises, thereby promoting the resolution of privacy ethics infringement issues. Through this interactive and co-governance model of multiple subjects, scattered moral constraints can be integrated into systematic institutional forces to jointly address the new privacy challenges brought about by generative artificial intelligence.

At the micro level, it is imperative to vigorously promote the popularization of media literacy

education. Through fostering human-machine collaboration literacy and awakening digital citizenship responsibility, we can achieve a leap in individual and social cognitive abilities. There is a must to enhance users' abilities to identify and prevent data risks, as well as to safeguard their rights according to the law, transforming them from passive victims of technology to active guardians of rights. When the overall digital literacy of society is enhanced, privacy protection will become a social consensus, providing solid ethical support for the healthy development of intelligent communication.

5. CONCLUSION

Intelligent communication technology brings about changes in the journalism while posing serious ethical challenges related to privacy. Privacy misconduct is the result of the interaction between technological risks, commercial logic, and the lack of norms. The future development of intelligent communication needs to prioritize ethics. It is necessary to establish an ethical foundation that meets the requirements of the new era by reshaping the ethical responsibility community, adopting a hierarchical protection approach, and coordinating the relationship between instrumental rationality and value rationality. This is not a technological spillover phenomenon, but rather a manifestation of the proliferation of instrumental rationality. In the digital era, privacy protection should not be an obstacle to progress, but rather a standard for measuring the level of communication civilization. Reshaping media responsibility means allowing individuals to regain their subjectivity under the dominance of computing power, so that technology serves personal dignity. Continuously exploring and improving a multi-party participation and comprehensive governance model to form a vibrant and binding communication ecosystem is the correct path for the news industry to return to its original intention and move towards the era of digital civilization.

REFERENCES

- [1] Pan Jianhong, Yang Shanshan, Construct a Community of Ethical Responsibility for the Privacy Governance of Artificial Intelligence [J]. Science & Technology Review, 2025,43(04): 30-36.
- [2] Chen Zhuo, Wang Su, Lin Chunyu, et al., Studies on Ethics of Big Data Privacy in the Platform Economy Based on Evolutionary Game Theory [J]. Nankai Economic Studies, 2024,(06): 92-109. DOI:10.14116/j.nkes.2024.06.006.
- [3] Peng Huanping, Liu Rongjiang, AI Reshaping the Media Ecology: Ethical Dilemmas, Cognitive Leap, and Governance Pathways [J]. Journal of Soochow University (Philosophy & Social Science Edition), 2025,46(06): 161-171. DOI:10.19563/j.cnki.sdzs.2025.06.015.
- [4] Mao Muran, Liu Jiahui, Dong Xiaomei, Improving the Controlling Access Theory of Privacy Concept and Strengthening Governance of Privacy Ethical Risks [J]. Journal of Dialectics of Nature, 2025,47(04): 93-101. DOI:10.15994/j.1000-0763.2025.04.011.
- [5] Xin Lili, Xu Chunliang, The Responsibility Ethics of Media Communication in Contemporary Society [J]. Qilu Journal, 2025,(02): 66-74.
- [6] Wang Juan, Tang Shukun, Ethical Risks of the Generative Informational Privacy Gap [J]. Studies in Science of Science, 2025, 43(06): 1293-1301. DOI:10.16192/j.cnki.1003-2053.20240717.004.
- [7] Mao Muran, Dong Xiaomei, On the Causes and Governance of the Ethical Risks of Information Privacy [J]. Studies in Dialectics of Nature, 2023,39(04): 23-28. DOI:10.19484/j.cnki.1000-8934.2023.04.002.
- [8] Chen Yixin, Value Conflict and Ethical Governance of Information Privacy [J]. Youth Journalist, 2022,(08): 42-44. DOI:10.15997/j.cnki.qnjz.2022.08.034.
- [9] Zhang Bo, Research on Data Ethics in the Era of Artificial Intelligence [J]. New Media and Society, 2021,(01): 85-95.
- [10] Yan Shijian, Data Privacy and Data Management from the Perspective of Data Ethics [J]. Journalism Lover, 2019,(08): 36-38. DOI:10.16017/j.cnki.xwahz.2019.08.009.
- [11] Wang Min, How to Effectively Protect Personal Privacy in the Era of Big Data? - A Hierarchical Approach Based on Communication Ethics [J]. Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies, 2018,25(11): 69-92+127-128.