

## Understanding Patterns of Homophily in Social Media Usage Among Journalists at the Nation Media Group, Kenya

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### Abstract

*This study investigates patterns of homophily in social media usage among journalists at the Nation Media Group (NMG) in Kenya. With the increasing integration of social media platforms into journalistic practices, understanding how journalists interact within their social networks on these platforms is crucial for comprehending information flow, diversity of perspectives, and implications for news production and audience engagement. The rationale for this study lies in the limited research on homophily patterns among journalists within the Kenyan media landscape, particularly within prominent media organisations like NMG. By examining the extent to which journalists' social media networks reflect homophily and the implications for their professional practices, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social media integration in journalism. Guided by the Hybridity Media Theory, this research employs a Pragmatic paradigm, explanatory sequential mixed method approach and survey design. With the aid of SPSS, quantitative data were analyzed statistically while with the aid of NVIVO - 12, qualitative data were analyzed thematically. From the population of 868 journalists, the investigation targeted 267 journalists using a published table for selecting sample sizes as put forth by Israel. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select 5 management personnel from NMG's various platforms. Key findings indicate varying degrees of homophily among journalists' social media networks, influenced by factors such as shared professional interests, ideological alignment, and personal affiliations. These patterns of homophily have implications for information diversity, news sourcing practices, and audience engagement strategies within NMG. Furthermore, this study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of social media usage among journalists at NMG, highlighting the presence of homophily and its implications for journalistic practices. By recognizing and addressing patterns of homophily, news organizations can strive for greater diversity of perspectives, enhance information sourcing strategies, and foster more inclusive audience engagement approaches.*

**Keywords:** Homophily, Social Media, Journalism, Nation Media Group (NMG), News Production

## Introduction

The integration of social media platforms into journalistic practice represents a significant evolution in the field of media and Communication. The traditional model of news production and dissemination, characterized by hierarchical newsrooms and print or broadcast media outlets, has evolved into a dynamic ecosystem where information flows freely across digital platforms, reaching audiences instantaneously and on a global scale (Flew & Humphrey, 2019). This Paradigm shift has posed both opportunities and challenges for media organizations, requiring them to adapt their practices to meet the demands of an increasingly digitized and interconnected world.

African countries have witnessed rapid growth in internet penetration and mobile phone usage in recent years, leading to the proliferation of digital media consumption habits among diverse populations (Ndemo & Weiss, 2019). As a result, African media organization, including legacy outlets like the Nation Media Group in Kenya, are grappling with the complexities of adapting traditional journalistic practices to the demands of digital media platforms while serving diverse audiences with varying levels of digital literacy (Ndemo & Weiss, 2019).

In Kenya, as in many parts of the world, the advent of social media has revolutionized the way news is produced, disseminated, and consumed. Scholars such as Gitonga (2020) highlight the transformative impact of social media on journalist-audience interactions, emphasizing the shift towards more interactive and participatory forms of news consumption. With the proliferation of smartphones and internet connectivity, audiences increasingly turn to social media platforms for real-time news updates and engagement with journalists and news organizations.

Mbatia et al., (2014) argue that the emergence of social media has necessitated a re-evaluation of traditional journalistic practices, as media organizations grapple with the challenges of engaging with a digitally savvy audience. While social media offers new opportunities for audience interaction and feedback, journalists often underutilize these platforms primarily using them for information gathering rather than meaningful engagement (Mbatia et al., 2014). This gap between the potential of social media and its actual use by journalists underscores the need for further exploration into the dynamics of social media integration in journalistic practice.

Furthermore, scholars such as Nyakundi et al., (2014) emphasize the democratizing potential of social media in Kenya, highlighting its role in enabling citizen journalism and facilitating public discourse. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter (now X) and YouTube have become important arenas for sharing news, discussing ideas, and mobilizing social movements. This democratizing potential of social media is not without its challenges as issues such as misinformation, online harassment, and privacy concerns continue to plague these platforms.

However, as journalists increasingly rely on social media for news gathering, audience engagement, and professional networking, questions arise regarding the nature of their interactions within these digital spaces. One key aspect of this inquiry is the phenomenon of homophily, which refers to the tendency of individuals to connect and interact with others who share similar characteristics or beliefs (McPherson et al., 2001). Understanding patterns of homophily among journalists at NMG is essential for comprehending information flows, network dynamics, and the implications for journalistic practices.

The rationale for this study stems from the limited research on homophily patterns among journalists within the Kenyan media landscape, particularly within prominent media organizations like NMG. While existing studies have explored social media usage among journalists and its impact on news production and audience engagement (Hermida, 2010; Singer et al., 2011), few have delved into the specific dynamics of homophily and its implications for journalistic practices in the Kenyan context. By investigating the extent to which journalists' social media networks exhibit homophily and the implications for their professional roles, this research aims to fill this gap in the literature and contribute to a deeper understanding of social media integration in journalism.

To address these research questions, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The quantitative component involves surveying journalists at NMG to gather data on their social media usage patterns, network composition, and perceptions of homophily. The qualitative component consists of in-depth interviews with selected participants to explore the underlying motivations, experiences, and implications of homophilous interactions within their social media networks. By triangulating these data sources, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of homophily patterns among journalists at NMG and their implications for journalistic practices in the digital age.

## Literature Review

Homophily, introduced by Lazarsfeld and Merton in the 1950s, describes how individuals form networks based on shared social characteristics, facilitating communication and influence within these groups. In political journalism, this phenomenon contributes to pack journalism, where reporters mutually reinforce their focus on similar angles and sources, leading to groupthink. This dynamic was vividly depicted by Tim Crouse during the 1972 US presidential election and continues in the digital age on platforms like X and Facebook. Studies have documented journalists' self-segregation by gender, age, news organization, and regional similarities, with mixed evidence on their engagement through replies, retweets, and mentions. This current research investigates these interactions to understand the processes of normalization and professionalization in hybrid media journalism, assessing homophily's impact on these evolving professional norms.

Homophily, the tendency for individuals to associate with those similar to themselves in social characteristics, has been largely overlooked in journalism studies despite its implications for "uncritical consensus, groupthink, and pack journalism" (Hanusch & Nölleke, 2019; Matusitz & Breen, 2012). Early research showed that journalists often formed "journalism-centred bubbles" on X and Facebook by interacting mainly with each other (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Lawrence et al., 2014; Lewis, 2012; Molyneux & Mourão, 2019; Mourão, 2015; Nuernbergk, 2016). The first in-depth exploration of homophily in journalism by Hanusch & Nölleke (2019) focused on general news reporters in Australia, highlighting factors such as beat, gender, and type of news organization.

Building on this, the current study examines homophily among journalists at Nation Media Group. Studies reveal that journalists often engage in pack journalism, reinforcing shared narratives and focusing on similar angles, especially visible on platforms like X and Facebook (Crouse, 1973; Bruns & Nuernbergk, 2019). This behavior is evident in interactions categorized by gender, age, news organization, and region (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018; Artwick, 2014; Parmelee et al., 2019; Usher et al., 2018; Larsson et al.,

2017; Vergeer, 2015), underscoring the importance of examining replies, mentions, and retweets to understand professional norms in hybrid media journalism.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital journalism, social media platforms have become integral tools for journalists to disseminate news, engage with audiences, and cultivate professional networks. Scholars have extensively studied the impact of social media on journalistic practices, highlighting its transformative effects on news production, distribution, and consumption (Hermida, 2010; Singer et al., 2011). However, less attention has been paid to the phenomenon of homophily and its implications for journalists' interactions within these digital spaces. Homophily, defined as the tendency for individuals to associate with others who share similar characteristics or beliefs (McPherson et al., 2001), offers valuable insights into the structure and dynamics of journalists' social media networks.

Research on social media usage among journalists has identified various factors that influence their online interactions. For example, scholars have explored how journalists use social media for news gathering, professional networking, and audience engagement (Hermida, 2010; Steiner et al., 2019). Additionally, studies have examined the role of social media in shaping journalists' perceptions of news values, newsroom routines, and ethical considerations (Singer et al., 2011; Vis et al., 2017). However, few studies have specifically investigated the extent to which journalists' social media networks exhibit homophily and the implications for their professional roles.

Understanding patterns of homophily among journalists is crucial for several reasons. First, homophilous interactions may reinforce existing biases and echo chambers within journalistic communities, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives and sources accessed by journalists (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016). Second, homophily can shape the diffusion of information within journalists' social networks, influencing which stories gain prominence and how they are framed (González-Bailón et al., 2012; Messing & Westwood, 2014). Finally, homophily may impact journalists' professional identities and practices, as they navigate the tension between personal expression and professional responsibilities in online spaces (Hermida et al., 2012; Bruns & Highfield, 2016).

While research on social media usage among journalists has proliferated in recent years, gaps remain in our understanding of homophily patterns within journalistic communities. By focusing specifically on journalists at the Nation Media Group (NMG), this study seeks to address these gaps and contribute to a deeper understanding of social media integration in Kenyan journalism. By examining the extent to which journalists' social media networks exhibit homophily, the factors that influence these patterns, and the implications for journalistic practices, this research aims to shed light on the complex interplay between social media and professional identity within the context of a prominent media organization.

## Theoretical Framework

The Hybridity Media Theory, introduced by Chadwick (2013), explains the interplay between traditional and digital media in contemporary society. It highlights the convergence of legacy media (newspapers, TV, radio) with digital platforms (social media, online news) to form a hybrid media system that influences information production and consumption (Chadwick, 2017). This shift has altered journalistic practices, replacing linear information flows with interactive, networked models (Xia et al., 2020).

The hybrid system fosters adaptation and appropriation between media forms, creating challenges and opportunities in third-party digital spaces governed by platform providers (Bruns & Nuernbergk, 2019). Initially, scholars anticipated enhanced journalist-audience interactions (Borger et al., 2013; Hermida, 2010), envisioning a more participatory journalism model (Jarvis, 2006). Chadwick's framework moved beyond the binary view of media, revealing power struggles between journalists and tech platforms as news audiences migrate online (Russell & Vos, 2022). This theory remains crucial for understanding evolving journalism dynamics.

## Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate patterns of homophily in social media usage among journalists at the Nation Media Group (NMG). The methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of journalists' online interactions, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques.

## Research Design

This study utilized a survey design, which assesses opinions, beliefs, and attitudes through questionnaires or interviews (Creswell, 2014). Surveys effectively capture quantitative data from large populations (Slavin, 2007). Yin (2014) identifies two types: cross-sectional, which examines a phenomenon at a specific time, and longitudinal, which tracks changes over time. This study employed a cross-sectional survey, collecting data on journalists' social media integration over 10 weeks. Surveys enabled the researcher to gather numerical data on social media practices, preferences, and perceptions from a representative sample of Nation Media Group journalists, enhancing external validity. The findings provide statistical insights and trends that may be generalizable to other journalists and media professionals in Kenya.

## Sampling

To determine the population size, three criteria-level of precision, confidence level, and variability-must be specified (Miaoulis & Michener, 1976). This study applied Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, with a 95% confidence level and a 0.05 margin of error, to derive a sample size of 267 from a population of 868 journalists at Nation Media Group (NMG). A multi-stage sampling approach combined cluster, purposive, and snowball sampling techniques. Media stations served as Primary Sampling Units (PSU), while NMG journalists were Secondary Sampling Units (SSU) under quota sampling. Participants were then purposively selected, and snowballing was used to reach additional respondents. Additionally, five senior journalists were interviewed to provide further insights.

## Research Instruments

This study used structured survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather perspectives. Closed-ended questionnaires, chosen for efficiency, collected data from 267 respondents on demographics, social media integration, and homophily, using a 5-point Likert scale (Saunders et al., 2012; Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003). The instrument was self-developed, drawing from Hybridity Media Theory, normalization hypothesis, and institutional logics (Chadwick, 2017; Margolis & Resnick, 2000). Semi-structured interviews with five senior journalists provided deeper insights (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).



## Validity and Reliability

Instrument validity ensures accuracy in quantitative research (Polit & Beck, 2004). The questionnaire was reviewed for face and construct validity to rectify errors before administration. Reliability, defined as consistency in measurement (Brink et al., 2012), was tested using a test-retest approach through a pilot study at Nation Media Group (NMG). A sample of 33 journalists and one chief bureau participated, with reliability assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Strong internal consistency was found for constructs such as social media integration (.877) and normalization (.868), while homophily (.748) showed acceptable reliability. High values for institutional logics (.839) and challenges of integration (.831) reinforced instrument reliability. These findings validate the study's measurement approach (McPherson et al., 2001; Hermida et al., 2012).

## Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher followed a systematic data collection process, starting with a pilot test and securing approvals from Moi University, NACOSTI, and NMG (Saunders et al., 2012). Top management facilitated access to journalists, and consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered physically and electronically via email and WhatsApp (Kaidy, 2005), with a two-week return period. Qualitative interviews were scheduled at participants' convenience, recorded, and transcribed. Challenges included participant withdrawal and scheduling conflicts.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 21), generating descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and percentages (Landau & Brain, 2004). The qualitative component used thematic analysis (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011), involving transcribing, coding, and interpretation. This structured analysis helped uncover insights into social media integration in journalism at NMG (Creswell, 2009). These approaches ensured a comprehensive understanding of social media use among journalists in Kenya.

## Ethical Considerations

In adherence to ethical guidelines, all procedures followed Moi university ethics policy. Ethical clearance was obtained from the School of Information Science, Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication. More clearance was obtained from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Education, Nairobi County and Ministry of Interior and National Administration, Nairobi County. Participants received informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, importance and voluntary nature of participation. Anonymity and confidentiality of information were assured.

## Results and Discussions

The paper sought to ascertain the extent of homophily in journalists' use of X and Facebook affordances at NMG. The construct under investigation 'homophily' was conceptualized as the tendency to follow and interact with people on social media who share similar professional interests. The homophily variable was measured by these parameters: tendency to interact with people who share similar professional interests, journalists' formation of filter bubbles, and online colleagues and peers in journalism. The analysis of the results is presented in table 1.1 below.

**Table 1: Extent of Homophily in Journalists' Use of X And Facebook Affordances at NMG (N=262)**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I tend to follow and interact with people on social media who share similar professional interests.	262	1.00	5.00	4.0916	.50211
I believe that journalists in my field often form filter bubbles on social media.	262	2.00	5.00	4.2176	.60204
The majority of my online social network consists of colleagues and peers in journalism.	262	2.00	5.00	4.4275	.62552
Valid N (listwise)	262				

(Source: Researcher's survey data output, April 2024)

The descriptive statistics provided offer insights into how journalists perceive and utilize social media in their professional capacities, particularly focusing on the emergence of filter bubbles and the composition of their social networks. The average score of 4.0916 suggests the prevailing tendency among respondents to connect and interact with individuals on social media who share similar professional interests. This points to an active engagement by journalists within their professional circles on platforms such as X and Facebook, potentially for networking, exchanging information, and fostering collaboration.

With an average score of 4.2176, respondents indicate a belief that journalists in their field frequently form filter bubbles on social media. This recognition among journalists suggests an acknowledgement of the potential for social media environments to reinforce existing beliefs and perspectives, potentially narrowing exposure to diverse viewpoints and sources of information.

Moreover, the average score of 4.4275 implies that a significant portion of respondents' social networks online consists of colleagues and peers within the journalism sphere. This observation suggests that journalists predominantly interact with other professionals in their field on social media platforms which could further contribute to the formation of filter bubbles while also facilitating professional networking and knowledge sharing within the industry.

In the context of the study on the integration of social media platforms in journalistic practice in Kenya, these findings underscore the significance of social media as a tool for professional networking and information exchange among journalists. However, they also emphasize the inherent risks associated with filter bubbles indicating a necessity for journalists to exercise caution in selecting the sources they engage with and actively seek out diverse perspectives and information sources on platforms like X and Facebook. Additionally, the notable presence of colleagues and peers within journalists' social networks underscores the role of social media in fostering collaboration and sharing knowledge within the journalism community.

On the same vein, the qualitative data and analysis on objective two, the extent of homophily in journalists' use of X and Facebook affordances at NMG addressed several variables ranging from: tendency to follow and interact with people on social media who share similar professional interests, how they perceive the formation of filter bubbles among journalists in their field on social media platforms to whether majority of their online social network comprised of colleagues and peers in journalism. Responses indicated that the extent of homophily in journalists' use of X and Facebook affordances at NMG was extensive and moderate based on the three variables. Responses from the qualitative study corroborates that of the

quantitative study which revealed that there is a high extent of X and Facebook integration in journalistic practice at NMG.

On the variable about, if they tend to follow and interact with people on social media who share similar professional interests. Respondent 4 said:

*Absolutely, I do. The reason is quite simple: I'm always striving to better myself. I see myself as my own competition. To gauge my progress, I compare where I was yesterday with where I am today. But that's not enough; I also need to look ahead to see who I want to become tomorrow. In my career, there are individuals who have already reached the level where I aspire to be. These are the people I closely follow on X and Facebook. I analyze their work, learn from their techniques and strive to understand what sets them apart. This practice is common among established journalists, both internationally and here in Africa. It extends to those who have achieved success in Europe, America, and Asia. By keeping tabs on them through platforms like X and Facebook, as well as other media platforms, I ensure that my professional interests align with their achievements and milestones. Ultimately, my goal is to reach the same pinnacle of success that they have attained.*

On the variable about the perceived formation of filter bubbles among journalists on social media platforms. Respondent 3 observed that:

*It's indeed a tricky situation. My perception sometimes waivers due to the vast array of individuals on social media. Among them are citizen journalists, professional journalists, and influencers, each with their own biases and agendas to promote. Influencers in particular often push a specific narrative to advance their projects or interests. Unfortunately, these narratives can overshadow those of mainstream media leading to their propagation and, at times acceptance by the public. As you mentioned in 2022, mainstream media sometimes found themselves overshadowed by these narratives. Politicians have become savvy in this regard as I learned from a conversation with my brother in Australia. It's become common for politicians to align themselves with specific media personalities to ensure their agenda is communicated effectively to the public. These alliances often result in the dissemination of well fabricated stories that manipulate the dynamics of social media platforms to their advantage. Thus, my perception of the situation tends to fluctuate due to these complexities and the power dynamics at play.*

Finally, the variable on whether majority of their online social network comprised of colleagues and peers in journalism and the influence it has on their interaction. Respondent 1 stated that:

*My social media platforms primarily consist of two groups: my primary colleagues, who work within the same media organization as me, and my secondary colleagues who are journalists from various other media organizations. When I refer to primary colleagues, I mean those who share the same workplace, while secondary colleagues are individuals I've encountered through shared educational backgrounds, career building workshops, or collaborated field assignments. We often share similar beats or interests in coverage, whether it's politics, health, sports, environment, or other topics. Over time, these connections have formed a sort of bubble where communication flows freely. Additionally, there are followers who have been with me since the early days of my career. They've consistently shown support, admiration, and a willingness to learn from my experiences. These individuals have had a profound influence on my work. Whenever I make a mistake, there is always someone, whether a colleague or a follower, who provides constructive criticism or guidance. Their feedback helps me to continually improve and refine my skills. Initially, when I first joined social media, I posted everything without much thought. However, as I progressed in my media career, I began to see the importance of professionalism and accuracy. Colleagues and followers would point out errors or provide suggestions for improvement, leading to my continual growth and education in the field. In essence, the interactions and feedback I receive on social media have been overwhelmingly positive and influential in shaping my professional development.*



The qualitative responses provide valuable insights into the extent of homophily in journalists' use of X and Facebook affordances at the Nation Media Group. Respondent 4's acknowledgement of following individuals who share similar professional interests, underscores the prevalence of homophilous behaviour among journalists at NMG. By closely monitoring the work of established journalists and learning from their techniques, the respondent demonstrates a proactive approach to professional development facilitated by social media platforms. This aligns with the notion that individuals tend to connect with others who share similar interests or goals contributing to the formation of homophilous networks within the journalism community at NMG.

Respondent 3's discussion on the formation of filter bubbles among journalists on social media platforms highlights the dynamics of information dissemination and influence within the digital sphere. The respondent's observations underscores the complexity of navigating social media environments where diverse voices and agendas vie for attention. The emergence of filter bubbles, shaped by biases, agendas, and power dynamics poses challenges for journalists in accessing diverse perspectives and combating misinformation. This suggests that while social media platforms offer opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing, they also present risks of reinforcing echo chambers and amplifying certain narratives, potentially influencing journalistic practices and public discourse within NMG.

Additionally, respondent 1's reflection on the composition of their online social network emphasizes the influential role of colleagues and peers in shaping professional development and fostering a supportive online community. The respondent's engagement with colleagues within NMG and across other media organizations underscores the interconnectedness of journalists within the industry and the collaborative nature of social media interactions by leveraging social media platforms to exchange ideas, receive feedback, and engage in professional discourse. Journalists at NMG contribute to the cultivation of a vibrant and cohesive journalistic community. The qualitative responses highlight the multifaceted nature of homophily in journalists' use of X and Facebook at NMG reflecting the complexities of professional networking, information sharing, and community building within the digital media landscape.

### **Interpretation and Discussion of Findings**

The findings regarding the extent of homophily in journalists' use of X and Facebook affordances at the Nation Media Group can be interpreted and discussed in light of key concepts and literature review including studies on homophily, filter bubbles, social network composition, and the role of social media in professional networking.

Research on homophily, such as the study by MacPherson et al., (2001), explores the tendency for individuals to form connections with others who share similar characteristics or interests. The findings from NMG indicate prevalent tendency among journalists to interact with individuals on social media who share similar professional interests, reflecting homophilous behaviour within their social networks. Respondent 4's acknowledgement of following individuals who share similar professional interests aligns with the concept of homophily, suggesting that journalists at NMG actively seek out connections with peers in their field to facilitate professional development and learning.

Studies on filter bubbles, such as the work by Pariser (2011), examine how algorithmic curation and self-selection on social media platforms can lead to the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs and perspectives. The findings from NMG

suggest a recognition among journalists of the potential for filter bubbles to form within their professional networks on social media. Respondent 3's observation on the formation of filter bubbles among journalists underscores the importance of critical awareness and diverse information sources in combating the effects of algorithmic curation and ideological polarization within digital information ecosystems.

Literature on social network composition and professional networking such as the research by Granovetter (1973) emphasizes the role of social connections in facilitating access to resources, information, and opportunities within professional communities. The findings from NMG highlight the significant presence of colleagues and peers within journalists' social networks on platforms like X and Facebook. Respondent 1's reflection on the composition of their online social network underscores the influential role of colleagues and peers in shaping professional development and fostering a supportive online community. This aligns with Granovetter's notion of the strength of weak ties and the value of diverse social connections in accessing new information and opportunities.

Hybridity theory, as discussed in works such as the study by Chadwick (2017), examines the blending of traditional and digital media practices in contemporary media environments. The findings from NMG reflect a hybrid approach to professional networking and information exchange, where journalists leverage both traditional and digital platforms to connect with peers and engage in professional discourse. Respondents' engagement with colleagues within NMG and across other media organizations underscores the hybrid nature of social media practices within the journalism community, where digital platforms serve as complementary tools for networking, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

Research on digital literacy and professional development such as the work by Buckingham (2015), highlights the importance of critical media literacy skills in navigating digital information environments and leveraging digital platforms for professional growth. The findings from NMG underscores the role of social media platforms in facilitating ongoing learning and skill development among journalists. Respondent 4's proactive approach to learning from established journalists on social media platforms reflects a commitment to digital literacy and continuous professional development, aligning with Buckingham's emphasis on the importance of critical engagement with digital media technologies.

These findings highlight the dynamics of professional networking, information exchange, and digital media practices within the journalism community underscoring the significance of social media platforms as tools for collaboration learning, and community building in the digital age.

## Implications and Recommendations

The study adds to the body of knowledge on homophily in professional networks within news organizations. By examining the extent to which journalists exhibit homophilous behaviour in their interactions on social media platforms, the research deepens our understanding of how professional networks shape information exchange and collaboration in contemporary journalism. This aspect of the study is particularly relevant given the increasing reliance on social media for sourcing news and engaging with audiences. The findings provide insights into the dynamics of professional networking among journalists at NMG and offer implications for promoting diversity and inclusivity within media organizations.

Based on the findings regarding the extent of homophily in journalists' use of X and Facebook affordances at NMG, two recommendations can be proposed. Firstly, NMG should promote diversity and inclusivity

within its social media networks by encouraging journalists to actively seek out connections with individuals who bring diverse perspectives and backgrounds. This can be facilitated through initiatives such as cross-departmental collaborations, networking events, and diversity training programmes. By fostering a more heterogeneous social media environment, NMG can enrich the exchange of ideas, promote critical thinking, and mitigate the risk of echo chambers or filter bubbles among its journalists.

Secondly, NMG should implement strategies to enhance the transparency and accountability of social media interactions among journalists. This could involve establishing clear guidelines and protocols for disclosing affiliations, conflicts of interest, and sources of information on social media platforms. Additionally, providing training on responsible online communication and fact checking techniques can empower journalists to engage with diverse viewpoints while upholding professional standards of accuracy and integrity. By promoting transparency and accountability in social media use, NMG can strengthen trust with its audience, enhanced credibility, and uphold the ethical standards of journalism in the digital age.

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There was no conflict of interest

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