Media and Communication Review (MCR)
Volume 5 Issue 1, Spring 2025
ISSN$_{(P)}$: 2790-8356, ISSN$_{(E)}$: 2790-8364
Homepage: https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/mcr

Article QR

Title: **Impact of Information Sharing Behavior on Global Investigative Journalism: Mediation Role of Needs and Sources**

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.51.10

History: Received: April 14, 2025, Revised: June 02, 2025, Accepted: June 09, 2025, Published: June 30, 2025

Citation: Butt, A. R., Ali, S. R., & Ahmad, Z. (2025). Impact of information sharing behavior on global investigative journalism: Mediation role of needs and sources. *Media and Communication Review*, *5*(1), 198–214. https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.51.10

Conflict of Interest: Author(s) declared no conflict of interest

A publication of
The School of Media and Communication Studies
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Impact of Information Sharing Behavior on Global Investigative Journalism: Mediation Role of Needs and Sources

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Abstract

The current study explores the impact of collaborative information sharing behavior of Pakistani journalists on the understanding of global investigative journalism (GIJ). Moreover, it assesses the mediating contribution of the needs of sharing information for companionship (SIC), sharing information for personal identification (SIPI), and sources used for information sharing (SUIS) under the theoretical perspectives of information acquiring and sharing and information activities in work tasks. Scales of information sharing behavior, needs of SIC, SIPI, SUIS, and the understanding of GIJ were constructed, while the opinions of 300 registered journalists were recorded. Cronbach's alpha was executed to test the reliability of scales. The impact of demographic characteristics, namely gender and age, was also tested. Independent sample t-test, ANOVA, and linear regression analysis were applied to test the relationships among the variables. PLS-Smart4 was used to test the proposed model. The results showed that information sharing behavior influenced the understanding of GIJ, although this understanding was enhanced due to the contributing role of mediating variables, namely the needs of SIC, SIPI, and SUIS. As compared to gender, age had a greater impact on sharing information to understand GIJ. The study can directly impact journalistic practices and policies. By understanding the specific needs and behaviors of journalists, media organizations can implement more effective strategies to support investigative journalism.

***Keywords*:** global investigative journalism, information sharing behavior, information sources, personal identification, companionship

Introduction

The 2016 release of the infamous Panama Papers proved to an important turning point in worldwide media collaboration. The International

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Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) spearheaded the effort, which gathered up journalists from 80 countries to analyse more than 11 million hacked documents. ICIJ's digital collaborative platform allows journalists from all over the world to pool their knowledge, abilities, and perspectives, notwithstanding the fact that very few of them have ever interacted with each other in reality (Hare, 2016; Konow-Lund & Bebawi, 2024). Most significantly, it functions as a center and meeting point for all journalists, regardless of their location. Journalists that work remotely from a traditional physical newsroom voice a sense of alienation with the culture of their company and comradery, as well as a decreased ability to engage and share information (Anderson, 2022; Hare, 2016). Moreover, journalists collaborate on global investigative journalism (GIJ) using various communication channels to share critical information (Chacón & Saldaña, 2021; Luo & Fang, 2025). ICIJ is a prime instance of this information-sharing partnership.

The notion of the networked Fourth Estate (Berglez & Gearing, 2018; Sampedro et al., 2018) condenses emergent journalism that analyses possible links between newsroom routines, as well as the obligations that digitally capable individuals may have in the public domain (Kaihlanen et al., 2023; Lloyd, 2012). Burnett and Lloyd described information landscapes more formally as "inter-subjectively produced environments that evolved through interactions between people, where data is created and shared." Nonetheless, the idea of information landscapes shows enormous promise to describe how individuals dynamically create information practice contexts. The (implicit) analogy's main strength is built on the intelligent application of affordance principles, as demonstrated by the recent examination of the construct of need patterns (Burnett & Lloyd, 2019).

Successive high-quality information sources are required for long-term information exchange. Information carriers supply the information (Chiu et al., 2006). Resultantly, only after an online community becomes a valued source of information, it would be able to draw in persons searching to acquire relevant knowledge from the community, as well as those with the necessary expertise to offer useful data (Kuttschreuter et al., 2014; Stvilia & Gibradze, 2022). Using traditional investigative skills in addition to recently developed social media tools and web-based communication technologies, investigative reporters in the world can report on sensitive and

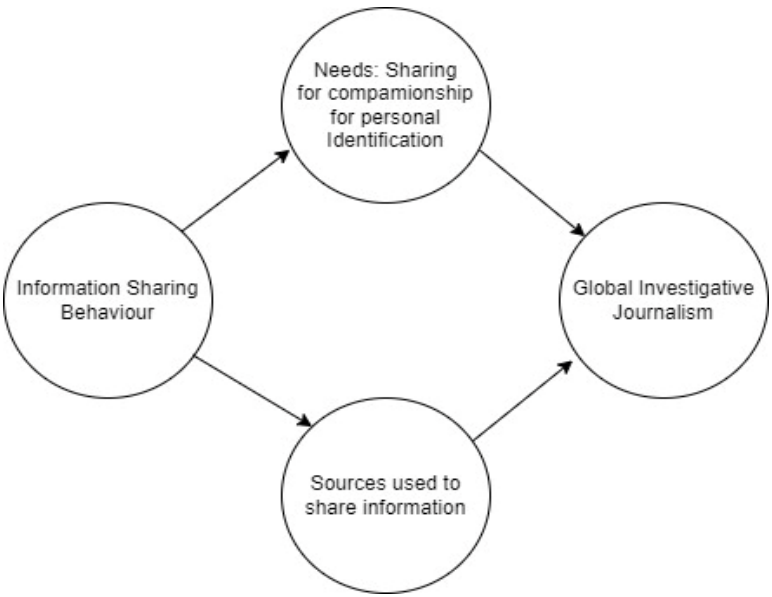
highly contentious news issues (Di Salvo, 2022; Torbor et al., 2025), examine such news problems both domestically and transnationally, and collaborating with different journalists and news outlets (Kuttschreuter et al., 2014).

Statement of the Problem

In today's interconnected world, the relationship between information sharing behavior (ISB) and global investigative journalism (GIJ) has become increasingly significant. To foster more effective collaboration, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of this relationship, including the mediating variables that influence it. Therefore, the current study proposes a conceptual model that explores the link between information sharing behavior and GIJ, incorporating the mediating role of the need to sharing information for companionship (SIC), sharing information for personal identification (SIPI), and the sources used for information sharing (SUIS). Furthermore, this study aims to examine the strengths and weaknesses of these mediating factors in shaping the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ, with the ultimate goal of enhancing collaborative efforts in the future.

Figure 1

Proposed Model for Information Sharing Behavior in GIJ



The above model has the theoretical underpinnings of information acquiring and sharing (Rioux, 2004) and information activities in work tasks (Toms, 2018) in which the collaborative information sharing process impacts the understanding of GIJ; if that sharing adds factors of needs of SIC and SIPI it enhances the understanding of GIJ. Sources in any information sharing process have their own significance. Information sharing cannot be fulfilled without sources. In recent scenario, the relationship as discussed by Rioux (2004), 'a need of sources' and kinds of these sources; personal and documents highlighted by Toms (2018), adds the impact of information sharing behavior. Therefore, this additional impact is also tested in the current study. To make it testable, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1. Demographic variables (gender, age) significantly contribute to the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

H2 (a). The need of SIC significantly mediates the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

H2 (b). The need of SIPI significantly mediates the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

H3. SUIS significantly mediate the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

Methods

In the current study, the opinions of 300 registered journalists of Pakistan were recorded by administering a survey conducted in July 2023. Demographic characteristics, namely gender and age, were used to gauge the influence of these variables on study measures. Independent variable, that is, information sharing behavior and dependent variable, that is, GIJ were measured by using reliable scales. The three mediating variables, namely the need for SIC, SIPI, and SUIS were also construed to check their mediating role in between the relationship of information sharing behavior and understanding of GIJ among Pakistani journalists. Independent sample t-test, ANOVA, regression analysis, and PLS-SEM were conducted to assess the relationship and test the proposed model. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 23.0) and PLS-Smart4 were used to analyze the data in the current study.

Measures of Study

A 5-item Likert scale was designed to measure the information sharing behavior of journalists in Pakistan. The response categories ranged from *strongly agree* = 5 to *strongly disagree* = 1. Cronbach's alpha was .834 (*M* = 13.52, *SD.* = 6.30). To measure the need for sharing because of companionship scale, a 5-item scale was designed. To measure the responses of journalists, five response categories were established. The Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was .799 (*M* = 15.53, *SD.* = 5.33). To measure the need for SIPI, again a 5-item scale was designed aligned with five response categories ranging from *strongly agree* = 5 to *strongly disagree* = 1, having .711 Cronbach's alpha value (*M* = 17.06, *SD.* = 4.68). The measure of sources was taken on a 5-point Likert scale, with five response categories ranging from *strongly agree* = 5 to *strongly disagree* = 1, having .807 Cronbach's alpha value (*M* = 15.70, *SD.* = 5.19). The dependent variable GIJ was measured by using an 8-item scale with five response categories ranging from *strongly agree* = 5 to *strongly disagree* = 1, having .799 Cronbach's alpha value (*M* = 25.83, *SD.* = 7.17).

Results

Table 1 reports the differences in scores of information sharing behavior, SIC, SIPI, SUIS, and GIJ in journalists on gender basis. It shows a significant difference of scores regarding information sharing behavior between male (*M* = 14.04, *SD* = 6.13) and female (*M* = 11.99, *SD* = 6.57); *t* (298) = 2.388, *p* = .018 journalists. The magnitude of the difference in the means (*MD* = 2.04, 95% CI: .35 to 3.68) is small (*eta squared* = .01). The table shows that female journalists show less information sharing behavior as compared to male journalists. Whereas, the scores of SIC, SPI, SUIS, and GIJ are not significantly different for male and female journalists.

Table 2 presents the results of ANOVA to examine the influence of age on information sharing behavior, SIC, ISPI, SUIS, and GIJ of journalists divided into four age groups: 21-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51-60 years. The information sharing behavior of journalists reveals a significant statistical difference: *F* (3, 296) = 7.956, *p* =.000. The difference in mean scores across age groups remains moderate (eta squared =.07).

Table 1

Impact of Gender on Information Sharing Behavior, SIC, SIPI, SUIS, and GIJ

	Men		Women		*df*	*p*	*t*	Cohen's d
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
Information Sharing Behavior	14.04	6.13	11.99	6.57	298	0.02	2.39	.01
Need: Sharing Information for Companionship	15.48	5.02	15.67	6.18	298	0.79	-0.27	---
Need: Sharing Information for Personal Identification	16.8973	4.42	17.53	5.36	298	0.31	-1.01	---
Sources Used for Information Sharing	15.67	4.83	15.75	6.17	298	0.91	-0.11	---
GIJ	25.65	6.83	26.34	8.15	298	0.47	-0.72	---

Table 2

Impact of Age on Information Sharing Behavior, SIC, SIPI, SUIS, and GIJ

Variables	21-30 year			31-40 year			41-50 year			51-60 year			*F*	η^2	Post-Hoc
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*(3,296)*		
Information Sharing Behavior	200	12.71	6.155	61	13.74	6.24	21	15.33	6.97	18	19.67	2.70	7.956	.07	4>3>2>1
Sharing for companionship	200	16.00	5.38	61	12.95	4.64	21	17.00	5.09	18	17.33	4.63	6.879	.06	1,3,4>2
Sharing for personal identification	200	17.33	4.58	61	15.51	4.88	21	19.57	4.17	18	16.33	4.06	4.800	.04	1,3,4>2
Sources for sharing	200	16.01	5.32	61	13.56	4.53	21	18.33	4.83	18	16.33	3.97	5.865	.05	1,3>2
GIJ	200	26.33	7.14	61	22.43	6.37	21	27.67	7.34	18	27.67	7.34	7.412	.06	1,3,4>2

The post-hoc Tukey-HSD test revealed the mean score of Group 4 (*M* = 19.67, *SD* = 2.70) as substantially higher than Group 1 (*M* = 12.71, *SD* = 6.155), Group 2 (*M* = 13.74, *SD* = 6.24), and Group 3 (*M* = 15.33, *SD* = 6.97). The table shows that journalists between the ages of 51 and 60 have the greatest proclivity for information sharing.

The table also shows a significant difference in SIC scores across journalists of various age groups: *F* (3, 296) = 6.879, *p* =.000. The mean difference in scores across groups remains minor (eta squared =.06). The post-hoc Tukey-HSD test revealed the mean score of Group 2 (*M* = 12.95.67, *SD* = 4.64) as substantially lower than Group 1 (*M* = 16.00, SD = 5.38), Group 3 (*M* = 17.00, *SD* = 5.09), and Group 4 (*M* = 17.33, *SD* = 4.63).

According to the data, journalists between the ages of 31 and 40 had the lowest SIC. The table also shows the statistical differences in ISPI scores among the journalists of various ages: *F* (3, 296) = 4.800, *p* = .000. The genuine difference in mean scores across groups remains minor (eta squared =.04). The post-hoc Tukey-HSD test revealed the mean score of Group 2 (*M* = 15.51.67, *SD* = 4.88) as substantially lower than Group 1 (*M* = 17.33, *SD* = 4.58) and Group 3 (*M* = 19.57, *SD* = 4.06). The table reveals that the journalists aged 31-40 years had the lowest SIPI, as compared to those aged 21-30 and 41-50 years. Group 4 (*M* = 16.33, *SD* = 4.06) similarly demonstrated higher SIPI tendencies than Group 2.

The table also shows statistical differences in SUIS among journalists of various ages: F (3, 296) = 5.865, p = .000. However, the mean score difference between the groups remains minor (eta squared =.05). The post-hoc Tukey-HSD test revealed that Group 1 (*M* = 16.01, *SD* = 5.32) and Group 3 (*M* = 18.33, *SD* = 4.83) exhibited substantially higher SUIS tendencies, as compared to Group 2 (*M* = 13.56, *SD* = 4.53). According to the table, the journalists between the ages of 31 and 40 years utilized SUIS the least.

The table also illustrates the statistical disparity in GIJ among the journalists of different age groups in Pakistan: *F* (3, 296) = 7.412, *p* = .000. The mean score difference between groups remains minor (eta squared =.06). The post-hoc Tukey-HSD test revealed Group 1 (*M* = 26.33, *SD* = 7.14), Group 3 (*M* = 27.67, *SD* = 4.83), and Group 4 (*M* = 27.67, *SD* = 7.34) as showing substantially more favorable behavior towards GIJ than Group 2 (*M* = 22.43, *SD* = 6.37). The table shows that journalists of the age group

31-40 showed a less positive behavior towards GIJ. The findings depicted in Table 1 and Table 2 advocate the acceptance of *H1*. Moreover, demographic variables (gender, age) significantly contribute to the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

Table 3

Contributing Factors for Considering GIJ Positive

Model Summary								
R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	*SE*	R^2 Change	*F* Change	*df1*	*df2*	*p*
.974	.950	.949	1.62337	.950	1387.394	4	295	.000

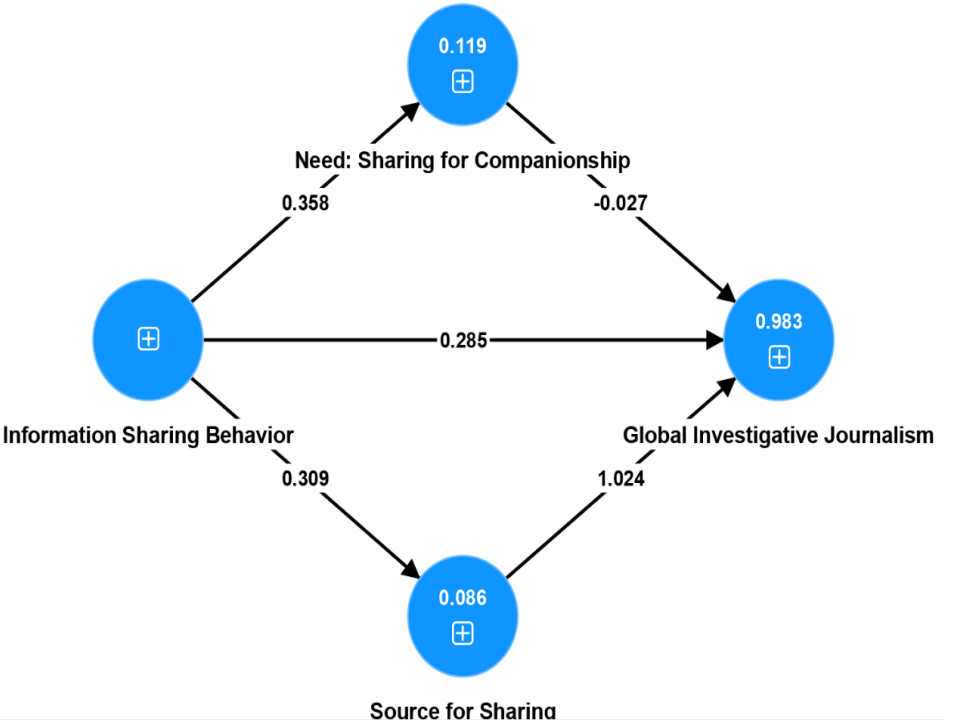
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Regression	14624.910	4	3656.228		
Residual	777.420	295	2.635	1387.394	.000
Total	15402.330	299			

Coefficients					
	B	SE	β	*t*	*p*
(Constant)	4.005	.390		10.258	.000
Information Sharing Behavior	-.025	.015	-.022	-1.653	.099
Need: Sharing for Companionship	.468	.055	.348	8.441	.000
Need: Sharing for Personal Identification	.146	.030	.095	4.916	.000
Sources for Sharing	.791	.062	.572	12.836	.000

The linear regression analysis shows that information sharing behavior, SIC, SIPI, and SUIS explain 95.0% of the variance in GIJ, F (4, 295) = 1387.39, p = .000 (Table 3). All the control variables significantly contributed to *GIJ* recording beta values (*beta* = -.22, *beta* = .34, *beta* = .095, *beta* = .572), respectively. The most contributing variable considering positive GIJ for the world was SUIS, followed by SIC. The above findings advocate the acceptance of ***H3.*** Moreover, SUIS significantly mediates the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

Figure 2

Contributing Role of the Need for SIC and SUIS



PLS-SEM was conducted to calculate the total effect size and R^2 adjusted of the independent variable (information sharing behavior) and mediating variables (needs: SIC and SUIS). Figure 2 shows that information sharing behavior contributed less to GIJ (β= 0.285), as compared to SIC (β= 0.358, R^2 adjusted value = 0.119) and SUIS, in order to have a positive understanding of GIJ (β= 0.309, R^2 adjusted value = 0.086). The contribution of SUIS was much more (β = 1.024) as compared to SIC (β = -0.027). The negative beta value indicates that less SIC entails a more positive understanding of GIJ in the journalists of Pakistan. The R-Square adjusted value (0.983) of GIJ shows the possibility that the model is feasible. Figure 2 advocates for the acceptance of *H2 (a)*. The need of SIC significantly mediates the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

Figure 3

Outer Loading Factor's Contribution for SIC and SUIS

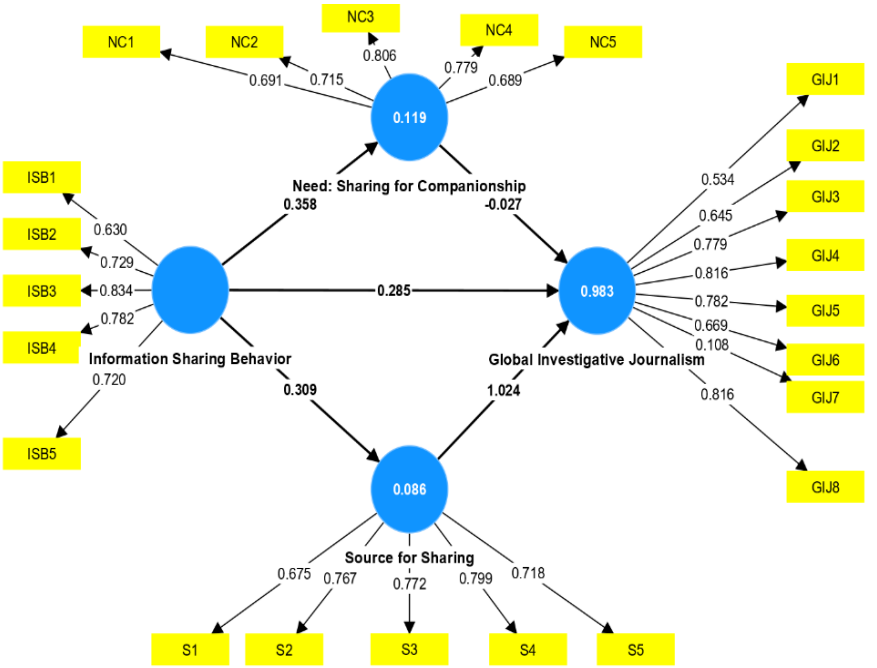


Figure 4

Contributing role of need for SIPI and SUIS

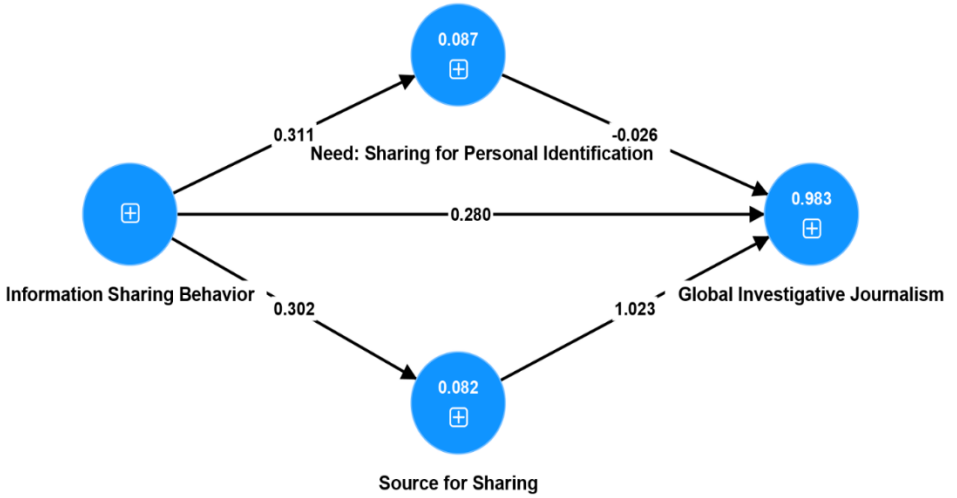


Figure 3 shows that in information sharing beviour, the outer loading factor ISB3 (time consume for Facebook for sharing information, β = 0.834), from SIC NC3 (journalist share information to ICIJ just for intimacy, β = 0.806), from SUIS S4 (the more information types are acquired, the more sources are used, β = 0.799), and from GIJ GIJ 4 (ICIJ is working for better world, β = 0.816) and GIJ 8 (ICIJ is working for humanity, β= 0.816) were the most significant contributors in the model.

Figure 4 shows a slight change in the model when another mediating variable is inserted, namely SIPI. Then, the effect of information sharing behavior on GIJ is reduced slightly (β = 0.280). The impact of information sharing behavior on SIPI ($\beta = 0.311$, R^2 adjusted value = 0.087) and on SUIS was also decreased (β = 0.302, R^2 adjusted value = 0.082). The impact of the contribution of SUIS (β = 1.023) and SIPI (β = -0.026) was slightly decreased but the R^2 adjusted value of GIJ remained the same (0.983), which depicts the feasibility of this model. Figure 4 advocates for the acceptance of *H2 (b).* The need of SIPI significantly mediates the relationship between information sharing behavior and GIJ.

Figure 5

Outer loading factor's contribution for SIPI and SUIS

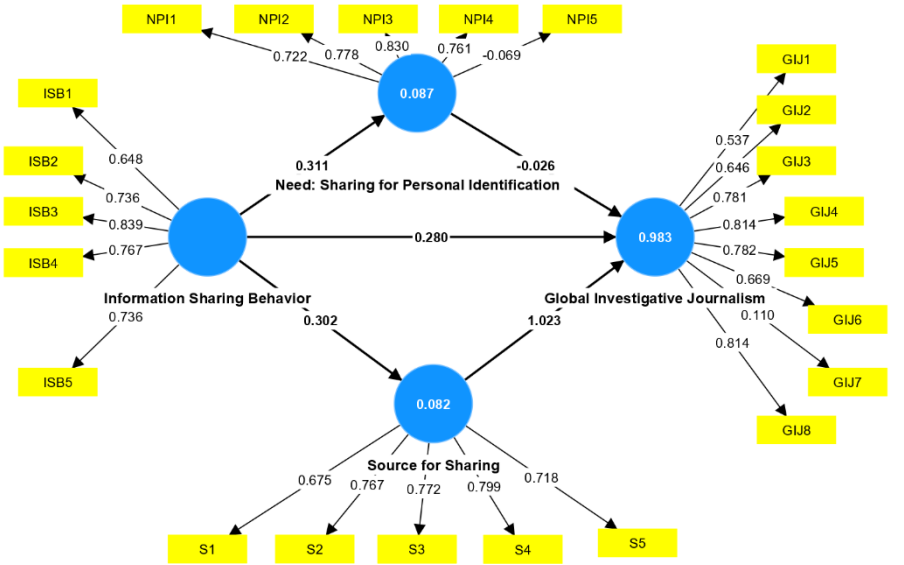


Figure 5 shows that in information sharing beviour the outer loading factor ISB3's value (time consume for Facebook for sharing information, β = 0.839) and from SIC NC3's value (journalist share information to ICIJ just for intimacy, β= 0.830) were slightly increased. However, from SUIS S4's value remained the same (the more information types are acquired, the more sources are used, β = 0.799). Moreover, from GIJ GIJ 4's value (ICIJ is working for better world, β= 0.814) and GIJ 8's value (ICIJ is working for humanity, β = 0.814) were slightly decreased but they still remained the most significant contributors in this model.

Discussion

Women journalists demonstrated less information sharing behavior than their male counterparts (Table 1). The findings suggest that journalists between the ages of 51 and 60 are more likely to share information for personal identification than those between the ages of 31 and 40 years. On the contrary, journalists aged 31-40 shared less information for companionship and utilized fewer sources for information sharing than other age groups. Further, they also showed less positive attitude towards GIJ (Table 2). The concept of professional identity influencing information sharing has been explored by various scholars. For instances, Tsfati (2008) discussed how professional identity can drive journalists to adhere to norms that emphasize transparency and information dissemination. Older journalists, having spent more years in the field, have a more entrenched professional identity, thus explaining their greater propensity towards SIPI.

SUIS is the most influential variable in terms of good GIJ, followed by SIC (Table 3). When compared to SIC, the contribution of SUIS is significant. The findings revealed that the less information shared for companionship, the more favorable the understanding of GIJ in Pakistani journalists (Figures 2). These results are consistent with prior research suggesting that younger journalists often face more precarious job conditions and are more skeptical about the feasibility and support for GIJ (Deuze, 2007; Rick & Hanitzsch, 2024). The rise of digital media and changing business models contribute to this skepticism, as younger journalists navigate an industry in flux.

Less time spent on Facebook, exchanging information with ICIJ for intimacy, more information kinds gained, more sources used, ICIJ working for a better world, and ICIJ striving for mankind emerge as the most

significant contributions in the model (Figure 3). SIPI reduced the impact marginally while leaving the value of GIJ constant (Figure 4). When other mediating variables, such as the necessity to provide information for personal identification were introduced, the most significant outer loading factors remained unaltered (Figure 5).

The finding that less time spent on Facebook correlates with positive outcomes, such as increased intimacy and more diverse information sources, aligns with the findings of the existing research on social media usage. Past studies often highlighted a negative impact of excessive social media use on mental health and social well-being (Kross et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022). For instance, Kross et al. (2013) found that Facebook use predicts decline in subjective well-being over time. The current research also indicates that exchanging information with ICIJ not only fosters intimacy but also enhances the variety of information sources. This aligns with the role of collaborative journalism and the benefits of investigative journalism highlighted in previous studies.

Conclusion

The study concludes that in the relationship between information sharing behavior and global investigative journalism, demographic variables (gender and age) are significant contributors. Moreover, the study validates the proposed model showing that demographic variables, along with the need to share information for companionship and personal identification, as well as sources used for information sharing, significantly contribute to understanding GIJ. It also establishes that decreased Facebook usage leads to increased information sharing behaviour, which is good for understanding GIJ. Furthermore, it suggests that the demand for information sharing for companionship and personal identification contribute equally to a strong comprehension of investigative journalism. According to the findings, further mediating variables should be investigated in establishing the link between information sharing behaviour and GIJ.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the findings of this study will be made available by the corresponding author upon request.

Funding Details

No funding has been received for this research.

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