



Abstract. Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the relationship between journalism, citizens, and public governance. Online media have become not only channels for the rapid distribution of information, but also important spaces in which public issues are interpreted, contested, and given social meaning. This creates new opportunities for public engagement and accountability, while simultaneously increasing the risks associated with the circulation of radical and extremist narratives. The study examines how such narratives are constructed and represented in the digital media environment and considers the role of online journalism in maintaining information integrity and public trust.

The research is based on a discourse-oriented analysis of 634 publications from six online news outlets in Uzbekistan, Russia, and France covering the period 2023–2025. Particular attention is given to the structural, semantic, and communicative characteristics of radical and extremist narratives and to the ways in which conflict framing, selective presentation of information, emotionalisation, value-based polarisation, decontextualisation, and the construction of “us–them” oppositions contribute to the formation of simplified or distorted interpretations of socially significant issues. The study argues that the governance implications of such discourse extend beyond media content itself: persistent exposure to polarising and manipulative narratives may affect perceptions of institutions, social cohesion, and confidence in legitimate sources of information.

Based on the empirical findings, the paper proposes a multi-level framework for strengthening the contribution of digital journalism to public governance. The framework combines systematic media monitoring, editorial verification and responsible framing,

constructive counter-narratives, media and information literacy, and cooperation between media organisations, public institutions, and civil society. Rather than treating journalism merely as an instrument for restricting harmful information, the study approaches it as a public-interest institution capable of strengthening information integrity and supporting informed civic participation. The findings contribute to research on journalism and governance by demonstrating how the quality and structure of digital media discourse can influence the resilience of the public information environment.

Keywords: Digital journalism; radical narratives; extremist narratives; media discourse; information integrity; public governance; online media; discursive resilience.

Introduction

The rapid transformation of the digital information environment has fundamentally changed the relationship between journalism, citizens, and public institutions. Online news media have expanded the speed, accessibility, and diversity of public communication, while simultaneously changing the ways in which socially significant events are selected, interpreted, and presented to audiences. In this environment, journalism performs not only an informational function but also an important interpretive function: through the selection of facts, attribution of statements, framing of events, and representation of social actors, journalistic discourse contributes to the formation of public understandings of political and social processes. This development has direct relevance to public governance because the quality of the information environment influences the conditions under which citizens evaluate public institutions, interpret public issues, and participate in public communication [6].

The problem becomes particularly complex in relation to radical and extremist narratives circulating in the digital envi-

ronment. Contemporary research demonstrates that online communication may contribute to the reinforcement of radical interpretations through repeated exposure, identity formation, interaction within like-minded communities, and other forms of communicative reinforcement [4]. At the same time, the spread of potentially harmful narratives cannot be explained exclusively through explicit extremist propaganda or the presence of specific ideological terms. Research on online extremism has increasingly demonstrated the importance of linguistic, visual, technological, and contextual factors in the formation and circulation of radicalising communication [2, 5, 12].

For journalism, this distinction is particularly important. Online news organisations routinely report on extremist organisations, radical political movements, violent incidents, ideological conflicts, and controversial public statements. The presence of such material in a news publication does not, by itself, indicate that the publication reproduces or supports extremist communication. Its communicative significance depends on how information is selected, attributed, contextualised, evaluated, and incorporated into the broader narrative. The distinction between radical-

ism, extremism, and terrorism is therefore not only terminological but also relevant to the analysis of media discourse, since the conceptual conflation of these phenomena may lead to an overly simplified interpretation of journalistic content.

The contemporary concept of information integrity provides an additional perspective for examining this problem. Information integrity concerns the broader conditions under which individuals receive accurate, evidence-based, plural, and contextualised information and are able to distinguish between reliable information, competing interpretations, and misleading content [6]. From this perspective, the problem is not limited to factual inaccuracies. A publication may contain individually accurate statements while nevertheless contributing to a distorted or highly polarised interpretation through selective framing, insufficient contextualisation, emotionalisation, or the unequal representation of social actors. The question of information integrity therefore requires attention to the discursive organisation of journalistic information as well as to its factual content.

This issue is closely connected with public trust. The relationship between information and institutional trust has become increasingly significant in digitally mediated societies, where citizens encounter information about public institutions through a fragmented and rapidly changing media environment. The OECD's research on trust in public institutions emphasises the importance of information integrity for the broader information environment in which citizens form judgements about institutions and public affairs [7]. Conse-

quently, the study of radical and extremist narratives in online journalism is relevant not only to media studies but also to questions of public communication, social cohesion, and the informational foundations of public governance.

Existing scholarship provides important theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of extremist narratives and online radicalisation. Researchers have examined the linguistic characteristics of radical communication, the development of extremist narratives in digital environments, the role of algorithmic systems in exposure to radicalising content, and the use of computational methods for identifying potentially harmful communication [8, 10]. Other studies have focused on the relationship between extremist narratives and mainstream digital media, demonstrating that potentially radical meanings may circulate beyond explicitly extremist communities and become incorporated into broader public communication [11]. Discourse-oriented research, in turn, has demonstrated the importance of examining the relationship between language, representation, power, and the construction of social identities [13, 15].

However, these research directions do not fully resolve the question of how professional online journalism mediates potentially radical and extremist narratives across different national media environments. Much of the existing literature concentrates either on extremist communities and social-media communication or on the automated detection of problematic content. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to the discursive mechanisms



through which professional news organisations may reproduce, contextualise, challenge, or transform potentially radical narratives within journalistic texts. This distinction is important because professional journalism operates under editorial, ethical, and public-interest norms and therefore occupies a different communicative position from closed extremist communities or unmoderated user-generated content.

The present study addresses this research gap by examining radical and extremist narratives in professional online journalism through a discourse-oriented comparative approach. The empirical analysis covers 634 publications from six online news outlets representing three national media contexts – Uzbekistan, Russia, and France – during the period 2023–2025. The study

focuses on six analytical dimensions: polarisation, selective framing, emotionalisation, decontextualisation, normative legitimisation, and antagonistic representation. These dimensions are not treated as automatic indicators of extremist discourse. Rather, they are examined as discursive mechanisms whose significance depends on their interaction within particular journalistic narratives and on the degree of attribution, contextualisation, plurality, and critical distance provided by the publication.

The aim of the study is to identify and interpret the principal discursive mechanisms through which radical and extremist narratives are represented in online journalism and to examine their implications for information integrity and public governance. To achieve this aim, the study

addresses several interrelated objectives: to examine the ways in which potentially radical and extremist narratives are incorporated into journalistic texts; to identify recurring patterns of polarisation, selective framing, emotionalisation, decontextualisation, normative legitimisation, and antagonistic representation; to compare their manifestation across the selected national media environments; and to determine which journalistic practices may reduce the risk of uncritical amplification and support a more resilient information environment.

The study contributes to the existing literature by connecting three areas that are often examined separately: research on radical and extremist narratives, research on information integrity, and research on the public role of journalism. Its

principal conceptual contribution is the proposed Discursive Resilience Model, which interprets professional journalistic practices such as contextualisation,

verification, transparent attribution, plural representation, and responsible framing as potential mechanisms for strengthening information integrity. In this approach, prevention does not imply the suppression of controversial or radical viewpoints. Rather, it concerns the development of journalistic conditions under which potentially harmful narratives can be critically examined, contextualised, and distinguished from verified information and legitimate public debate.

Accordingly, the study approaches digital journalism as an important intermediary within the contemporary public information environment. Its role in relation to radical and extremist narratives is understood as ambivalent: journalistic discourse may contribute to the visibility and amplification of polarising interpretations, but professional mediation may also provide mechanisms for contextualisation, critical examination, and prevention of their uncritical normalisation. Examining this dual function makes it possible to consider the relationship between digital journalism and public governance not through the logic of information control, but through the quality, integrity, and resilience of the communicative environment in which public understanding is formed.

Literature Review

The digital transformation of the media environment has generated a growing body of research examining the relationship be-



tween journalism, information quality, and public communication. The development of online news platforms has expanded access to information and enabled audiences to encounter a greater diversity of sources and interpretations. At the same time, the fragmentation and acceleration of digital communication have created new difficulties concerning the verification, contextualisation, and evaluation of information. These developments have encouraged researchers and international organisations to reconsider information integrity as a broader characteristic of the information environment rather than as a question of factual accuracy alone.

The OECD conceptualises information integrity in terms of the conditions that enable individuals to access diverse, reliable, evidence-based, and plural information and to make informed judgements on the basis of such information [6]. Within this perspective, professional journalism remains an important component of a healthy information environment because journalists can provide verified information, contextual explanation, source attribution, and competing perspectives. The challenge is that these professional functions increasingly operate within a digital environment characterised by rapid circulation, fragmented audiences, and platform-mediated distribution.

Research on trust in journalism further demonstrates that credibility is connected not only with the factual accuracy of individual news items but also with the ways in which journalistic institutions represent public events and social actors. Digital journalism therefore occupies an intermediary position between information

production and public interpretation. The journalist does not simply transmit an already existing reality; editorial selection and narrative organisation contribute to the ways in which audiences understand events and public issues [1]. This interpretive dimension becomes particularly important when journalism covers issues characterised by conflict, ideological confrontation, or contested representations of social groups.

The relationship between information integrity and public governance has consequently received increasing scholarly and policy attention. Reliable and plural information provides citizens with the informational conditions necessary for evaluating public institutions and participating in public debate. Conversely, distorted, decontextualised, or highly polarised information environments may weaken the conditions for informed public communication [7]. This does not mean that individual journalistic publications directly determine public attitudes or institutional trust. Rather, the literature suggests that the quality and structure of the wider information environment constitute an important contextual factor in the formation of public understanding.

A parallel body of scholarship has examined the relationship between digital communication and radicalisation. Earlier approaches frequently concentrated on extremist organisations, propaganda materials, recruitment practices, and the ideological content of radical communication. More recent research has increasingly emphasised the networked and interactive characteristics of digital environments, in which radical interpretations may develop

through repeated exposure, social interaction, identity construction, and communicative reinforcement.

Mikhaeil and Baskerville [4], for example, examine online conspiracy-theory radicalisation through the concept of identity-driven escalation. Their analysis demonstrates that radicalisation cannot be reduced to exposure to a single piece of content; rather, communicative environments may contribute to processes in which shared identities and repeated interactions reinforce increasingly radical interpretations. This perspective is important for media research because it shifts attention from individual messages toward the broader communicative structures within which messages acquire meaning.

Other studies have focused on the linguistic characteristics of online radicalisation. Müller et al. [5] use corpus-driven lexicometric analysis to examine linguistic patterns associated with different forms of radicalisation in social-media communication. Their work demonstrates the value of systematic linguistic analysis while also revealing the methodological difficulties involved in interpreting online communication, where meaning is highly dependent on context, interaction, platform characteristics, and the identity of communicators.

Computational approaches have similarly become increasingly prominent in the study of online extremism. Govers et al. [2] review approaches to the detection of online extremism, radicalisation, and politicised hate speech and demonstrate the growing role of automated and computational techniques in identifying potentially harmful communication. Such approaches are valuable for large-

scale monitoring, but the identification of problematic lexical or behavioural patterns does not necessarily explain the communicative function of a particular expression. A term associated with extremism may appear in propaganda, criticism, neutral reporting, academic discussion, or quotation, with substantially different meanings in each case.

This distinction is particularly relevant to professional journalism. A journalistic publication may contain extremist terminology because it reports on an extremist organisation, quotes a controversial speaker, describes a violent incident, or critically examines a radical ideology. Consequently, the mere presence of extremist vocabulary cannot be treated as sufficient evidence that the journalistic text itself constitutes extremist communication. The analytical focus must instead include the source of the statement, its attribution, narrative position, surrounding context, and the journalist's treatment of the material.

Recent scholarship has increasingly moved from the study of extremist content toward the concept of extremist narratives. Postigo Fuentes et al. [8] emphasise the importance of defining extremist narratives as complex communicative constructions rather than reducing them to isolated ideological statements. This approach makes it possible to examine how particular interpretations are organised, how identities are constructed, and how relations between social groups are represented.

The concept of narrative is particularly useful for journalism because news discourse itself is structured through

processes of selection, sequencing, attribution, and interpretation. When potentially radical or extremist claims enter the news environment, they may be reproduced, contextualised, contested, transformed, or challenged. The resulting journalistic narrative is therefore not necessarily identical to the original ideological communication from which a statement originated.

Research on extremist narratives in mainstream digital environments provides additional evidence for this distinction. Stoencheva and Mileva Boshkoska [11], examining online discussions concerning migration in Sweden, demonstrate how extremist narratives can enter broader digital public discourse and interact with mainstream discussions. Their findings are relevant to the present study because they draw attention to the process through which narratives associated with extremist interpretations may acquire visibility outside explicitly extremist communities.

The question of mainstreaming is also important in understanding the relationship between media discourse and radicalisation. Wodak [15] demonstrates how exclusionary and polarising political discourse can become normalised through repeated discursive practices, particularly when linguistic strategies construct clear distinctions between social groups. From a discourse-analytical perspective, the significance of such processes lies not simply in the use of particular words but in the cumulative construction of social identities, legitimacy, threat, and belonging.

Van Dijk [13] similarly emphasises the relationship between discourse, social

representation, and power. His approach is particularly relevant to the present research because it allows attention to be directed toward the ways in which social actors are represented, whose perspectives are foregrounded or marginalised, and how apparently neutral descriptions may contribute to particular interpretations of social reality. Such an approach provides a theoretical basis for examining polarisation, antagonistic representation, selective framing, and normative evaluation within online journalism.

The linguistic and visual dimensions of radicalising communication have also received empirical attention. Tomczyk et al. [12] demonstrate that radicalising effects may involve combinations of textual and graphical cues rather than explicit ideological statements alone. This finding supports a broader understanding of media discourse in which meaning is produced through the interaction of language, representation, context, and communicative form.

Taken together, the literature demonstrates substantial progress in the study of online radicalisation and extremist communication. Researchers have developed approaches for identifying extremist language, analysing radicalisation processes, examining extremist narratives, and understanding the role of digital platforms in the dissemination of potentially harmful content. However, these research directions frequently focus on social-media environments, extremist communities, computational detection, or individual-level radicalisation processes.

A comparatively less developed area concerns the role of professional online

news media as an intermediary space. Professional journalism differs from user-generated or explicitly extremist communication because its production is normally mediated by editorial routines, professional standards, source selection, verification practices, and institutional responsibilities. These characteristics mean that the same radical or extremist claim may acquire substantially different meanings depending on whether it is reproduced without context, critically examined, attributed to a source, placed within a broader explanatory narrative, or accompanied by alternative perspectives.

This issue also reveals a conceptual limitation in approaches based primarily on content detection. Automated identification can establish that certain terms, expressions, or patterns are present, but it cannot always determine their discursive function. A journalistic text containing an extremist statement may simultaneously challenge that statement, provide contextual evidence against it, or expose its ideological assumptions. Conversely, a publication containing no explicit extremist terminology may still construct an antagonistic or exclusionary interpretation through framing, omission, emotionalisation, or the selective representation of social actors.

The literature therefore points toward the necessity of distinguishing between *extremist content* and *the journalistic mediation of extremist or radical narratives*. This distinction forms a central premise of the present study. The analysis does not classify a publication as extremist merely because it contains references to radical or extremist actors. Instead, it examines

how potentially harmful narratives are organised within journalistic discourse and which communicative mechanisms may increase or reduce their potential for uncritical circulation.

The reviewed literature reveals three related but insufficiently integrated research traditions. The first examines digital journalism, information integrity, and public trust; the second investigates online radicalisation and extremist communication; and the third applies discourse analysis to the construction of social identities, ideological positions, and relations of power. Each provides important insights, but the intersection between these fields remains comparatively underdeveloped, particularly in relation to professional online news media across different national media environments.

The present study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of 634 publications from six online news outlets in Uzbekistan, Russia, and France covering the period 2023–2025. Rather than measuring radicalisation as an individual psychological outcome, the study examines the discursive mechanisms through which potentially radical and extremist narratives are represented within professional journalism. Six analytical dimensions are used: polarisation, selective framing, emotionalisation, decontextualisation, normative legitimisation, and antagonistic representation.

The study further extends existing approaches by connecting these discursive mechanisms to the concept of information integrity. The central analytical question is not simply whether potentially radical or extremist content appears in online

journalism, but under what communicative conditions such content is contextualised, challenged, reproduced, or normalised. On this basis, the study develops the concept of discursive resilience, understood as the capacity of journalistic practices to preserve contextual integrity, source transparency, interpretive plurality, and critical distance when reporting on potentially polarising or extremist material.

This perspective also provides a link between media discourse and public governance. The contribution of journalism to governance is understood here not as gov-

extremist narratives cannot be determined solely by the presence of particular ideological expressions or references to extremist actors. In digital journalism, potentially harmful narratives acquire meaning through processes of selection, attribution, contextualisation, evaluation, and representation. Consequently, the analytical focus should be placed on the relationship between the content of a statement and the discursive function it performs within a journalistic text.

This approach draws on the broader understanding of discourse as a form of



ernmental control over information, but as participation in the formation of the informational conditions within which public issues are interpreted. The proposed approach therefore places professional journalistic mediation at the intersection of information integrity, social communication, and preventive communication practices.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the premise that the communicative significance of radical and

social practice through which meanings, identities, relations between social groups, and positions of power are constructed and reproduced. From a discourse-oriented perspective, media texts are not neutral containers of information: the selection and organisation of information contribute to the ways in which social reality is represented and interpreted. Van Dijk [13] emphasises the relationship between discourse, social cognition, and power, while Wodak (2021) demonstrates how political and ideological meanings may become normalised through recurring discursive strategies. These approaches provide a the-

oretical basis for examining how potentially radical or extremist interpretations may be reproduced, challenged, or transformed within journalistic communication.

For the purposes of the present study, radical and extremist narratives are therefore understood as discursively organised interpretations of social or political reality that may construct rigid identities, legitimise exclusionary positions, intensify antagonism, or present particular forms of confrontation as justified or necessary. This definition does not equate radicalism with extremism and does not assume that every controversial or radical position is extremist. Instead, the analysis considers the specific communicative configuration through which a narrative is constructed and positioned within a journalistic text.

This distinction is particularly important in the analysis of online journalism. News organisations may legitimately report on extremist organisations, radical political positions, violent incidents, ideological conflicts, or controversial statements. The journalistic reproduction of such material does not automatically constitute its endorsement. Its discursive significance depends on whether the material is attributed to identifiable sources, contextualised, challenged, accompanied by alternative perspectives, or incorporated into a broader explanatory narrative. The theoretical framework therefore distinguishes between *reporting on radical or extremist content and discursive reproduction or normalisation of such content*.

The second conceptual foundation of the study is the notion of information integrity. The OECD defines information integrity in relation to information envi-

ronments that provide access to accurate, evidence-based, and plural sources and enable individuals to encounter diverse ideas and make informed judgements [6]. This approach is particularly relevant to digital journalism because it moves the analysis beyond the binary distinction between true and false information and draws attention to the structural and communicative conditions under which information is produced and consumed.

Within this framework, information integrity is treated as a multidimensional characteristic of the public information environment. It includes factual reliability, source transparency, contextual completeness, plurality of perspectives, and the possibility of distinguishing verified information from unsupported or misleading interpretations. The concept is therefore directly relevant to the analysis of radical and extremist narratives because a narrative may influence public interpretation not only through factual inaccuracies but also through selective presentation, omission of context, emotional intensification, or unequal representation of social actors.

The relationship between discursive practices and information integrity is not assumed to be deterministic. A particular framing choice does not automatically produce a harmful informational outcome. Rather, its significance depends on the interaction of several communicative features and on the broader context in which the publication is presented. The present study consequently treats information integrity as an *outcome-sensitive analytical dimension*, examining how journalistic practices may either preserve or weaken contextual and interpretive integrity.

This perspective also creates a connection between journalism and public governance. A high-quality information environment provides citizens with conditions for forming informed judgements about public issues and public institutions. OECD research similarly identifies the quality of the information ecosystem as an important contextual factor in the formation of informed judgements and institutional trust [7]. The study therefore does not conceptualise public governance as direct control over journalistic content. Instead, governance relevance is understood through the communicative conditions that influence public understanding, social cohesion, and informed participation.

On the basis of the reviewed literature and the analytical objectives of the study, six discursive dimensions were established for empirical analysis: *polarisation*, *selective framing*, *emotionalisation*, *decontextualisation*, *normative legitimation*, and *antagonistic representation*. These dimensions are treated as analytical categories rather than as independent indicators of extremism. Their significance emerges from their interaction within particular journalistic narratives.

Polarisation refers to the construction of an issue through rigid oppositions between social groups, political positions, or competing value systems. Polarising discourse may reduce the perceived range of legitimate interpretations by organising complex situations through binary distinctions such as “us” and “them”. From a discourse-analytical perspective, such oppositional structures are significant because they may influence

how social actors are evaluated and how responsibility, legitimacy, and threat are distributed within a narrative [13, 15].

Selective framing concerns the relative prominence assigned to particular facts, actors, causes, or consequences within a journalistic account. Selection is an inherent characteristic of journalism and cannot itself be regarded as problematic. It becomes analytically significant when particular elements are repeatedly foregrounded while relevant contextual or alternative information remains marginal. In relation to radical or extremist narratives, selective framing may therefore contribute to a restricted interpretive framework within which audiences encounter an issue.

Emotionalisation denotes the intensified use of affective, evaluative, or emotionally charged language in the construction of an event or social actor. Emotional expression is not inherently incompatible with professional journalism, particularly when reporting humans suffering or public reaction. Its relevance to the present framework emerges when emotional intensity becomes a dominant mechanism through which an issue is interpreted and when it interacts with polarisation, antagonistic representation, or decontextualisation. In such configurations, emotionalisation may increase the communicative force of simplified interpretations.

Decontextualisation refers to the presentation of statements, events, or claims without sufficient information concerning their origins, circumstances, historical background, or relationship to the broader issue under discussion. Decontextualisation is particularly important in digital environments characterised by fragment-

ed and rapid information consumption. A statement removed from its original context may acquire a meaning different from that intended by its source or may appear to represent a complete account of an issue when only one element is presented.

Normative legitimization concerns the discursive presentation of a particular position, action, or interpretation as inherently justified, necessary, correct, or morally superior. The analytical focus is not on whether a position is objectively legitimate but on how legitimacy is constructed within the text. In the context of radical and extremist narratives, normative legitimization becomes particularly relevant when actions, identities, or forms of confrontation are represented as naturally justified and alternative positions are excluded from consideration.

Antagonistic representation refers to the construction of social actors through rigid oppositions in which particular individuals or groups are represented as threats, enemies, outsiders, or fundamentally incompatible with another group. This mechanism is closely connected with the representation of social identities and relations of power. Discourse-oriented research has long demonstrated that media representation can contribute to the reproduction of social distinctions by determining which actors receive access to public discourse and how they are described [13].

The six dimensions are analytically interconnected rather than mutually exclusive. Selective framing may intensify polarisation by repeatedly foregrounding conflictual elements; decontextualisation may facilitate emotionalisation by

removing information that could moderate an immediate reaction; and antagonistic representation may provide an identity structure through which normative judgements become more persuasive. The analytical framework therefore treats the six dimensions as components of a discursive configuration, rather than as isolated textual characteristics.

The combination of the above dimensions makes it possible to conceptualise the relationship between radical and extremist narratives and journalistic practice as a process rather than as a simple content-based classification. The study proposes a four-level analytical sequence:

discursive risk → *journalistic mechanism* → *information-integrity outcome* → *governance implication*.

The first level, *discursive risk*, concerns the communicative mechanisms through which a narrative may become polarising, emotionally intensified, decontextualised, exclusionary, or normatively legitimised. The identification of such a mechanism does not mean that the publication is itself extremist. Rather, it indicates a particular feature through which the interpretation of potentially harmful material may be intensified or restricted.

The second level, *journalistic mechanism*, concerns the professional practices through which the potentially harmful effects of such discursive configurations may be moderated. These include contextualisation, verification, transparent attribution, plural sourcing, inclusive representation, and responsible framing. The significance of these practices lies in their capacity to create critical distance between the original claim and its journalistic presentation.

The third level, *information-integrity outcome*, concerns the resulting quality of the informational environment. When journalistic mediation provides sufficient context, transparent sourcing, and interpretive plurality, audiences receive greater opportunity to evaluate claims critically. Conversely, when potentially harmful narratives are repeatedly presented through selective, emotionally intensified, decontextualised, or antagonistic configurations, the interpretive space available to audiences may become narrower.

The fourth level, *governance implication*, concerns the broader communicative consequences of these processes. Information integrity is relevant to public governance because citizens require reliable and plural information in order to interpret public affairs and evaluate institutional actions. The OECD's framework similarly connects information integrity with societal resilience, media plurality, public trust, and institutional responses to information-related risks [6, 7]. The present study consequently understands governance relevance as an indirect outcome of the quality of public communication rather than as a justification for restricting journalistic expression.

On this theoretical basis, the study introduces the concept of *discursive resilience*. Discursive resilience is defined here as the capacity of professional journalism to maintain contextual integrity, source transparency, interpretive plurality, and critical distance when reporting on polarising, radical, or potentially extremist narratives.

Discursive resilience does not imply the elimination of controversial opinions

from public discourse. Nor does it imply that journalists should suppress radical political or ideological positions merely because they are controversial. Its emphasis is instead placed on the *quality of mediation*: whether claims are attributed, contextualised, verified where possible, presented alongside relevant perspectives, and distinguished from established facts.

This conceptualisation is consistent with the broader information-integrity approach, which emphasises strengthening the information environment rather than relying exclusively on the removal or restriction of individual pieces of content. The OECD framework similarly identifies the plurality and transparency of information sources, societal resilience, and institutional capacity as complementary dimensions of information integrity [6].

The theoretical framework culminates in the *Discursive Resilience Model* proposed by the study. The model connects the six identified discursive risks with corresponding journalistic practices, information-integrity outcomes, and broader governance implications.

The model should not be interpreted as a causal formula in which a particular journalistic practice automatically produces a predetermined social outcome. Rather, it provides an analytical structure for examining the relationship between discursive features and professional mediation. Its principal function is to connect micro-level textual characteristics with broader questions of information integrity and public communication.

The conceptual contribution of the model lies in shifting the analytical focus from the simple identification of harmful con-

tent toward the conditions of its *journalistic mediation*. Such a shift is particularly important in digital journalism, where professional news organisations coexist with social-media platforms, user-generated content, algorithmic recommendation systems, and rapidly circulating fragments of information. The journalist's role in this environment is therefore not limited to selecting what becomes visible; it also includes determining how potentially contentious material is attributed, contextualised, interpreted, and incorporated into a public narrative.

The model consequently provides the conceptual basis for the empirical analysis of the 634 publications examined in this study. It allows the research to investigate not only the recurrence of six discursive mechanisms but also the extent to which journalistic practices may moderate their potential informational effects. In this sense, discursive resilience is approached as a professional and communicative capacity through which digital journalism can contribute to the integrity and resilience of the public information environment.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative comparative research design combining systematic content analysis, discourse analysis, and cross-national comparison. The combination of these methods makes it possible to identify recurring discursive characteristics in the empirical material and to interpret their function within broader journalistic narratives. The analysis focuses not only on the presence of potentially radical or extremist content but also on the ways

in which such content is selected, framed, contextualised, attributed, and incorporated into professional online journalism.

The empirical corpus consists of 634 publications from six online news outlets representing three national media environments: Uzbekistan, Russia, and France, published during 2023–2025. The unit of analysis is the individual journalistic publication. Materials were selected purposively according to their relevance to the research focus. Each publication was examined with attention to its headline, lead, narrative structure, source attribution, lexical and evaluative choices, representation of social actors, contextualisation, and, where relevant, the interaction of textual and visual elements.

The analytical procedure was organised around six dimensions established in the theoretical framework: polarisation, selective framing, emotionalisation, decontextualisation, normative legitimisation, and antagonistic representation. Systematic coding was used to identify these features, after which discourse analysis was applied to examine their function within broader narratives and their relationship to information integrity. Particular attention was given to distinguishing between the reporting of radical or extremist statements and their discursive reproduction, normalisation, or legitimisation. This distinction was necessary because the presence of extremist terminology or references to extremist actors does not, in itself, make a journalistic publication extremist.

The comparative stage examined how the identified mechanisms were configured across the three national media environments. The findings were subsequently interpreted through the proposed Discursive

Resilience Model, which connects discursive risks with journalistic mechanisms, information-integrity outcomes, and broader governance implications. The study is limited by its purposive sample and qualitative design; therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all online journalism in the countries examined. The research also does not measure audience responses or establish causal relationships between journalistic practices and radicalisation, public attitudes, or institutional trust.

Methodologically, the study follows established principles of qualitative content analysis and discourse-oriented research [3, 9, 15].

Results and Discussion

The analysis of 634 publications from six online news outlets in Uzbekistan, Russia, and France during 2023–2025 revealed a recurring set of discursive mechanisms through which radical and extremist narratives were represented, contextualised, challenged, or incorporated into journalistic discourse. The analysis identified six interconnected dimensions: polarisation,

selective framing, emotionalisation, decontextualisation, normative legitimisation, and antagonistic representation. These dimensions did not function as isolated textual characteristics. Their significance emerged primarily from their interaction within broader journalistic narratives and from the ways in which they shaped the interpretive context surrounding potentially radical or extremist claims.

This finding supports the broader understanding that extremist narratives cannot be adequately identified through isolated words, expressions, or thematic references. Previous research has demonstrated that radicalising communication may involve combinations of linguistic, visual, contextual, and identity-related elements rather than explicit ideological statements alone [5, 12]. The present study extends this perspective by examining how such elements are mediated within professional online journalism. A journalistic publication may contain a radical or extremist statement without itself reproducing the underlying narrative. Its discursive function depends on attribution, contextualisation, source positioning, narrative structure, and the presence or absence of critical distance.

Discursive risk	Journalistic mechanism	Information-integrity outcome	Governance implication
Polarisation	Contextualisation and plural representation	Interpretive plurality	Social cohesion
Selective framing	Balanced sourcing and verification	Better-informed interpretation	Public trust
Emotionalisation	Responsible framing	Reduced affective manipulation	Constructive public debate
Decontextualisation	Contextual reporting	Contextual integrity	Informed citizenship
Normative legitimisation	Transparent attribution	Source awareness	Accountability
Antagonistic representation	Inclusive representation	Reduced exclusionary framing	Social cohesion

Polarisation and antagonistic representation emerged as closely related mechanisms. In the analysed publications, conflict was not necessarily constructed through explicit ideological advocacy. It could also be produced through the repeated opposition of social actors, the foregrounding of confrontation, or the representation of particular groups primarily through categories of threat, danger, or incompatibility.

This observation corresponds with discourse-oriented research, which demonstrates that social identities and relations of power can be constructed through oppositional representations of social actors [13, 15]. At the same time, the findings require an important distinction between legitimate representation of conflict and discursive polarisation. Digital journalism routinely reports on political, social, and ideological disagreement, and the presence of opposing positions does not in itself constitute harmful discourse. The relevant issue is whether the narrative preserves interpretive plurality or reduces complex social relations to rigid categories of “us” and “them”.

The analytical significance of antagonistic representation therefore lies in its cumulative effect within a publication. When a group is repeatedly associated with threat while alternative contextual or interpretive information is absent, the resulting narrative may provide limited resources for understanding the complexity of the issue. In this respect, polarisation becomes relevant to information integrity not because journalism should eliminate disagreement, but because the reduction of complex conflicts to binary oppositions may restrict the interpretive plurality available to audiences.

A second important pattern concerned the interaction between selective framing and decontextualisation. Selection is an unavoidable element of journalistic practice: a publication cannot include every available fact, source, or interpretation. The analytical problem therefore does not lie in selection itself but in the relationship between what is selected and the broader context made available to the audience.

The findings indicate that potentially radical or extremist narratives acquire different communicative meanings depending on whether they are accompanied by historical, social, political, or evidentiary context. A statement presented without sufficient contextualisation may appear more representative, authoritative, or socially significant than it would within a fuller narrative. Conversely, contextual reporting can establish the status of a claim, identify its source, and provide information necessary for critical interpretation.

This finding is consistent with the broader concept of information integrity developed by the OECD, which extends beyond factual accuracy to include access to reliable, diverse, and evidence-based information [6]. It also complements research on information disorder, where the organisation and circulation of information are understood as important dimensions of the contemporary information environment [14].

The results consequently suggest that information-integrity risks may arise even when individual statements contained in a publication are factually correct. A fact can remain accurate while its presentation produces a partial or distorted interpretive context. From the perspective of digital

journalism, contextual completeness is therefore not simply an additional stylistic quality but an important component of responsible mediation.

Emotionalisation represented another recurring dimension of the analysed discourse. Emotional language is not inherently problematic in journalism; reports concerning violence, terrorism, social conflict, or human suffering necessarily involve emotionally significant material. The analytical issue arises when emotional intensification is combined with other discursive mechanisms in ways that reduce the space for contextual evaluation.

The findings suggest that emotionalisation becomes particularly significant when it interacts with polarisation or decontextualisation. A strongly emotional narrative accompanied by limited contextual information may encourage an immediate interpretation of events through threat, fear, anger, or moral opposition. Previous research on radicalising communication similarly demonstrates the importance of affective and symbolic cues in the construction of persuasive ideological messages [12].

Normative legitimization constitutes a related but distinct mechanism. In journalistic discourse, claims can acquire additional authority through the way sources are selected, attributed, evaluated, or positioned within the narrative. The use of authoritative sources is an essential element of professional reporting, but the analytical issue concerns whether the status of a claim is made transparent to the audience.

Transparent attribution can therefore function as an important mechanism of discursive resilience. Distinguishing between verified information, a source's

allegation, an interpretation, and an evaluative statement enables audiences to assess the evidentiary status of different elements within a publication. This finding corresponds with research emphasising the importance of trust, transparency, and credibility in digital journalism [1].

One of the principal findings of the study is that the six dimensions should not be treated as independent variables. Their communicative significance is produced through interaction. Selective framing may intensify polarisation; decontextualisation may increase the emotional force of a statement; emotionalisation may reinforce antagonistic representation; and normative legitimization may give greater authority to a particular interpretation.

This interaction is particularly important for understanding the difference between content detection and discourse analysis. Computational and corpus-based approaches provide valuable tools for identifying potentially extremist language and patterns of radicalisation at scale [2, 5]. However, the presence of a particular lexical or thematic feature does not by itself establish its function within a journalistic publication. A quotation may reproduce extremist terminology in order to criticise it; a headline may contain emotionally charged language while the article itself provides extensive contextualisation; and a report may describe an extremist organisation without endorsing its claims.

The findings therefore support a distinction between discursive presence and discursive function. This distinction is particularly important for professional journalism because the same linguistic material can perform substantially different



communicative functions depending on its narrative positioning.

The comparative analysis of the three national media environments indicates that the identified mechanisms are analytically applicable across different journalistic contexts. The study does not suggest that Uzbekistan, Russia, and France demonstrate identical patterns or that the identified mechanisms operate independently of national institutional and cultural conditions. Rather, the comparison demonstrates the usefulness of a common analytical framework for examining how similar discursive risks may be configured differently in different media environments.

This comparative perspective is important because research on online radicalisation has frequently concentrated on social-media platforms, extremist communities, or individual-level processes [4,

10]. Professional online news organisations represent a different communicative environment. They operate through editorial procedures, professional norms, source selection, and institutional accountability. Consequently, their role cannot be reduced to that of social-media users who circulate or encounter extremist material.

The findings instead position digital journalism as an intermediate communicative layer between the production of potentially radical narratives and their broader public interpretation. At this level, journalistic practices can either reproduce particular narrative configurations or introduce contextual, evidentiary, and interpretive resources that allow audiences to assess them more critically.

This interpretation provides the basis for the study's principal theoretical contribution, the Discursive Resilience

Model. Existing approaches have made substantial progress in identifying extremist narratives, detecting radicalising language, and examining the technological conditions under which such content circulates [2, 5, 8]. The present study complements these approaches by asking what happens when potentially harmful narratives enter professional journalism and become subject to editorial mediation.

The proposed model connects four analytical levels:

discursive risk → *journalistic mechanism* → *information-integrity outcome* → *governance implication*.

Within this framework, polarisation may be addressed through contextualisation and plural representation; selective framing through balanced sourcing and verification; emotionalisation through responsible framing; decontextualisation through contextual reporting; normative legitimisation through transparent attribution; and antagonistic representation through more inclusive representation of social actors.

The model is not proposed as a predictive or causal formula. Rather, it provides an analytical structure for interpreting the relationship between discursive mechanisms and journalistic practices. Its main contribution is to connect discourse analysis with the professional and governance dimensions of information integrity.

The concept of discursive resilience developed from this model refers to the capacity of professional journalism to preserve contextual integrity, source transparency, interpretive plurality, and critical distance when dealing with polarising, radical, or potentially extremist

narratives. In this sense, resilience should not be understood as the elimination of controversial content. It concerns the capacity of journalistic mediation to prevent potentially harmful narratives from being presented without the contextual and evidentiary resources required for informed interpretation.

The findings also have implications for public communication and governance. Information integrity is not produced exclusively within newsrooms. It emerges through interaction among media organisations, public institutions, civil society, educational institutions, platforms, and citizens. The OECD's recent work similarly approaches information integrity as a broader societal and institutional challenge involving reliable information, media ecosystems, public communication, and societal resilience [6].

From this perspective, prevention should not be reduced to the suppression of problematic content. A communication-oriented preventive approach involves strengthening the conditions under which citizens encounter and interpret potentially polarising information. For professional journalism, this includes verification, contextualisation, transparent attribution, plural representation, and responsible framing. For public institutions, it includes timely access to reliable information, transparent communication, and support for media and information literacy.

Such measures do not eliminate disagreement or controversial narratives from the public sphere. Their purpose is to strengthen the communicative conditions under which audiences can distinguish between verified information,

attributed claims, ideological positions, and unsupported interpretations. This approach places the emphasis on the quality of mediation rather than on control of the information environment.

Taken together, the results demonstrate that the relationship between digital journalism and radical or extremist narratives is more complex than a simple opposition between amplification and prevention. Professional journalism may contribute to the visibility of a narrative simply by reporting on it, but the same act of reporting can also provide contextualisation, verification, source transparency, and critical examination.

The study therefore contributes to existing research in three related ways. First, it shifts analytical attention from extremist communication itself toward its mediation within professional online journalism. Second, it conceptualises information-integrity risks as potentially emerging from the discursive organisation of factually accurate as well as inaccurate information. Third, it proposes the Discursive Resilience Model as a framework connecting discursive risks with journalistic practices and broader governance implications.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted within the methodological limitations of the study. The purposive corpus of 634 publications does not provide a statistically representative basis for generalising the results to all online journalism in the three countries. The qualitative interpretation of discourse also involves an analytical dimension that cannot be reduced entirely to automated measurement. Furthermore, the study

does not examine audience reception and therefore cannot establish direct causal relationships between particular journalistic mechanisms and radicalisation, changes in public attitudes, or institutional trust. The analysis is limited to professional online news outlets and does not encompass private messaging environments or the full range of social-media communication.

These limitations also indicate directions for further research. Future studies could combine discourse analysis with computational content analysis, audience research, and longitudinal designs to examine how discursive mechanisms develop over time and how different forms of journalistic mediation are interpreted by different audiences. Comparative research could additionally expand the number of national media systems and examine the relationship between professional journalism, social-media platforms, and algorithmic recommendation systems.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the preventive potential of digital journalism lies not primarily in excluding controversial or radical content from the public sphere, but in the quality of its mediation. Contextualisation, verification, transparent attribution, interpretive plurality, and responsible framing can strengthen the informational conditions under which potentially polarising narratives are understood. The Discursive Resilience Model consequently provides a conceptual basis for further research into how professional journalism can contribute to information integrity and constructive public communication in increasingly complex digital media environments.

Conclusion

The study examined the discursive mechanisms through which radical and extremist narratives are represented and mediated in digital journalism and considered their implications for information integrity and public governance. Based on the qualitative analysis of 634 publications from six online news outlets representing Uzbekistan, Russia, and France during 2023–2025, the research demonstrates that the communicative significance of potentially radical or extremist narratives depends not only on the content of individual statements but also on the ways in which such statements are framed, contextualised, attributed, and incorporated into journalistic narratives.

The analysis identified six interconnected discursive mechanisms: polarisation, selective framing, emotionalisation, de-contextualisation, normative legitimisation, and antagonistic representation. These mechanisms should not be understood as indicators of extremist discourse in isolation. Their analytical significance emerges from their combination and communicative function within a particular journalistic context. This distinction is essential for avoiding the conflation of reporting about radical or extremist actors with the reproduction or normalisation of their narratives.

The findings further demonstrate that information-integrity risks may arise even in the absence of explicitly false information. Selective framing, insufficient contextualisation, emotional intensification, and asymmetrical representation can in-

fluence the interpretive conditions under which audiences encounter socially significant information. In this respect, the study extends the understanding of information integrity from the problem of factual accuracy toward the broader question of how reliable, contextualised, transparent, and plural information is constructed within professional journalism. This perspective corresponds with the broader international understanding of information integrity as an information environment that enables access to accurate, evidence-based, and plural sources and supports informed judgement [6].

The principal theoretical contribution of the study is the **Discursive Resilience Model**, which connects four analytical levels: discursive risk, journalistic mechanism, information-integrity outcome, and governance implication. The model provides a framework for examining how professional journalistic practices may moderate the circulation and interpretation of potentially harmful narratives. It places particular emphasis on contextualisation, verification, transparent attribution, plural representation, and responsible framing as mechanisms capable of strengthening the resilience of the public information environment.

The concept of discursive resilience proposed in this study should therefore be understood not as the suppression or removal of controversial content, but as the professional capacity of journalism to maintain critical distance, contextual integrity, source transparency, and interpretive plurality when reporting on polarising or potentially extremist subjects.

Such an approach is particularly relevant in digital environments, where the speed and scale of information circulation increase the significance of journalistic mediation.

The findings also indicate that strengthening information integrity is not solely a responsibility of individual journalists or media organisations. It involves a broader communication ecosystem in which professional media, public institutions, civil society, educational organisations, and citizens interact. Public institutions can contribute by providing timely and verifiable information, maintaining transparent communication practices, and supporting media and information literacy, while media organisations can strengthen the quality of public communication through verification, contextualisation, and responsible narrative construction. This multi-actor perspective is consistent with the OECD's current approach to information integrity, which emphasises transparency, plurality, societal resilience, media literacy, and institutional capacity rather than reliance on information control alone [6].

The study has several limitations. The purposive corpus of 634 publications does not provide a statistically representative basis for generalising the findings to all online journalism in the three countries. The qualitative interpretation of discourse also necessarily involves an analytical component that cannot be reduced to automated measurement. In addition, the study does not examine audience reception and therefore cannot establish direct causal relationships between particular

journalistic mechanisms and processes of radicalisation, changes in public attitudes, or levels of institutional trust. The analysis is also limited to professional online news outlets and does not encompass private messaging environments or the full range of social-media communication.

These limitations define directions for further research. Future studies could combine discourse analysis with larger-scale computational content analysis, audience research, and longitudinal comparison in order to examine how discursive mechanisms develop over time and how different forms of journalistic mediation are interpreted by different audiences. Comparative research could also expand the number of national media systems and examine the interaction between professional journalism, social-media platforms, and algorithmic recommendation systems.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the role of digital journalism in relation to radical and extremist narratives cannot be reduced either to the passive transmission of information or to direct prevention of radicalisation. Its significance lies in the mediating function through which potentially polarising narratives are selected, contextualised, attributed, and made publicly meaningful. Strengthening this mediating capacity through professional standards and discursive resilience can contribute to a more reliable, plural, and contextually informed information environment and provide a constructive basis for communication between journalism, society, and public institutions.

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