



Burnout in journalists: A systematic literature review[☆]



Jasmine B. MacDonald^{*}, Anthony J. Saliba, Gene Hodgins, Linda A. Ovington

School of Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Boorooma St., Wagga Wagga, NSW 2678, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 September 2015

Accepted 2 March 2016

Keywords:

Burnout
Job stress
Journalists
Work-related factors
Job satisfaction
Gender

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to provide a concise, comprehensive, and systematic review of the quantitative literature relating to the experience of burnout in journalists of various specialties and mediums. The systematic review method adopted is that prescribed by Fink (2010), which contains three main elements: Sampling the literature, screening the literature, and extracting data. Results indicate that journalists most at risk of burnout are females who are younger, with fewer years of journalism experience, working in small circulation newspapers. Editors and reporters seem to experience higher levels of burnout than those in other roles, as do journalists in non-management positions. The thorough and structured process adopted in this review provides the ability to assert with some degree of certainty what areas within the burnout and journalism literature require further consideration. This review emphasises and problematizes the large focus on male reporters in newspaper settings, settings that are becoming less significant over time. Studies have tended to focus on reporters, without providing a convincing a priori rationale. What is lacking is consideration of other role groups central to broadcast news, such as camera-operators. A range of methodological and theoretical issues and future areas of research are discussed.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier GmbH. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Contents

1. Introduction.....	35
1.1. Rationale and aim.....	35
2. Methods.....	35
2.1. Sampling the literature.....	36
2.2. Screening procedure.....	36
2.3. Data extraction.....	37
3. Review.....	37
3.1. Burnout and journalists.....	37
3.1.1. Mean scores on the MBI-HSS and MBI-GS.....	38
3.1.2. Burnout and work-related factors.....	39
3.1.3. Burnout and journalistic role.....	40
3.1.4. Burnout and circulation/market size.....	41
3.1.5. Burnout and years of experience.....	41
3.1.6. Burnout and age.....	41
3.1.7. Burnout and gender.....	41
3.1.8. Theoretical considerations of burnout in journalists.....	42
4. Conclusions and recommendations.....	42
Conflict of interest.....	43
Acknowledgements.....	43
References.....	43

[☆] This review was conducted under the provision of an Australian Postgraduate Award to the first author. However, the Australian Government were not involved in the topic selection for the research or in any other phase of the research or decision to submit for publication.

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: jmacdonald@csu.edu.au (J.B. MacDonald), asaliba@csu.edu.au (A.J. Saliba), ghodgins@csu.edu.au (G. Hodgins), lovington@csu.edu.au (L.A. Ovington).

1. Introduction

In recent times there has been much discussion of the increasingly violent and fear driven nature of commercial news (Dworznik, 2006) and the media more generally (Furedi, 2006). The negative impact of news content on viewers has been a prominent trend within the academic domain (Newman, Shapiro, & Nelson, 2012; Smith & Wilson, 2000; Van der Molen and Bushman, 2008). There is global demand for up-to-date news, particularly when disaster strikes. However, often little consideration is given to the kinds of events and experiences journalists are exposed to in order to meet this demand. Past research and individual reports indicate that the potentially traumatic events (PTEs) journalists cover in their day-to-day work can have negative psychological implications for them, and therefore their families and the broader journalism industry. Psychological research concerning journalists has tended to focus on their exposure to PTEs and the associated individual level of trauma reactions and cognitive changes experienced, such as increased levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression symptoms (Feinstein, 2012; Simpson & Boggs, 1999; Weidman, Fehm, & Fydrich, 2008) or altered world assumptions (Pyeovich, Newman, & Daleiden, 2003).

A fundamental aspect of the work journalists do is to interact and form relationships with a wide range of people. These interactions commonly take place with victims, or friends and family of victims, experiencing some kind of news worthy crises or dilemma. Here the interest is not just on covering victims of large-scale disaster but also on general exposure to the broad spectrum of behaviours evident in society. It is not uncommon for local journalists to cover the same story more than once in some way or another over time, and therefore have ongoing contact with victims. This focus on getting the story from distressed individuals is comparable to the “relational transactions in the workplace” (Leiter, Maslach, & Schaufeli, 2001, p. 400) that play a key role in the development of burnout symptoms. Burnout is a concept that originally concerned human services personnel. The person-focused work of journalists parallels the experiences of those in the human services and is what makes journalists an important population when considering burnout. However, unlike human services personnel, journalists are not trained to make a difference directly in the lives of the people they work with, as they are there to tell the story and not to intervene. They also perform this role in an industry, and often organisational, context that individual reports have suggested is widely unaware and sometimes avoidant or stoic regarding the psychological risks of such work (Cooper, 1999; Matloff, 2004).

In addition to this high level of PTE exposure coupled with reduced perceived efficacy to bring about change, there is a range of organisational and industry factors that make journalists a population of interest when considering burnout. And whilst important work has been done to assess trauma exposure and reactions in journalists (for a review see MacDonald, Hodgins, & Saliba, 2015), it is these organisational and industry factors that are omnipresent and increase general levels of stress amongst journalists of all backgrounds and job roles and put them at risk of developing burnout. Indeed there have been a number of reports as early as the 1980s indicating that news organisations have sought psychological support services for their staff as a result of high levels of stress (Aiken, 1996; Shepard, 1999) and burnout (Wines, 1986).

As an industry, journalism has undergone a number of changes and continues to evolve. Of particular interest to the current discussion is the drive to cut costs within media organisations. This frequently means reduced staff size and therefore increased workload, as well as long and irregular hours for journalists. Unfortunately this change has also been associated with reduced income for journalists despite the greater workload and responsibilities (Radio-Television News Directors Association, 2009). Journalists

find themselves in an industry and organisational context of increased competitiveness, ongoing changes in technology and job roles, resource constraints, and constant deadlines. The result of these demands on journalists is that they have reduced capacity to perform basic self-care and work/life balance (i.e. maintaining relationships and a healthy diet, getting a good nights sleep, and exercising), further exacerbating the psychological implications of their work (Maskaly, 2008). Another issue is that recent graduates can quickly become disillusioned when they find that the values they were taught are not always fostered in real world practice contexts (Pihl-Thingvad, 2014). Journalists of varying experience levels are at risk of burnout when they have personal and professional motives for maintaining high practice standards in an environment where they have reduced levels of control, staffing support, budget, and a diminished sense of purpose (Goetz, 2002; Kalter, 1999).

A unique concern in journalism is the “product of one’s labors playing out in public and carrying real stakes” (Kalter, 1999, p. 30), including potential legal ramifications and associated costs to the individual or organisation. As such, staff experiencing symptoms of burnout are a potential liability for organisations if they are not provided appropriate support. There is also an industry trend in which many roles and services are being pushed in to freelance modes, meaning less security and organisational support, and increased isolation for journalists (Newman, 2002). Each of the factors outlined are problematic in their own respect. However, the overall prognosis for journalists becomes even dimmer when one considers the traditionally stoic and cynical newsroom culture that pervades many organisations, meaning many journalists feel that they cannot seek social support from their colleagues or management without the risk of seeming weak or fearing the loss of their job (Di Giovanni, 2009; Vorenberg, 2012). Alternatively, journalists may turn to less useful coping mechanism such as alcohol because they are socially more appropriate in the newsroom culture (MacDonald, Saliba, & Hodgins, 2015). In addition to the impact of these factors on the individual journalist, the broader journalism industry is impacted in a range of qualitative and economic ways, as job commitment declines and employee turnover increases (Reinardy, 2011a).

1.1. Rationale and aim

The present systematic literature review (SLR) aims to provide a concise, comprehensive, and systematic review of the quantitative literature relating to the experience of burnout in journalists as a result of a range of demographic and work-related factors. It does so by maintaining clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as transparency regarding the manner in which quality of the studies sampled was assessed. In this way, the findings will provide a valuable synthesis of existing knowledge to inform future directions in burnout research and practice in journalists. It also has the capacity to raise issues and make suggestions for research and practice in other specific occupational groups. The research question is: ‘What insights can the quantitative literature provide regarding burnout as an implication of journalistic work?’ There appears to be two other review article written regarding the psychological implications of journalistic work (Aoki, Malcolm, Yamaguchi, Thorncroft, & Henderson, 2012; MacDonald, Saliba et al., 2015), however, neither consider burnout.

2. Methods

The systematic review method adopted within the present study was based on that prescribed by Fink (2010), which contains three main elements: Sampling the literature, screening the literature, and extracting data. This procedure is highly consistent with previ-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/317832>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/317832>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)