

Between Exhaustion and Resilience: A Systematic Review of Burnout Outcomes and Coping Strategies in Contemporary Journalism (2000–2025)

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review synthesises publicly available empirical evidence (2000-2025) on burnout among journalists, an understudied occupational health phenomenon whose individual and systemic repercussions raise critical questions about media integrity, professional resilience and democratic accountability. Guided by two objectives, the review first examines the consequences of burnout on journalists' quality of life and quality of work. Studies report chronic fatigue, insomnia, hypertension, depression, anxiety and post traumatic stress, along with diminished creativity, ethical tension and disengagement within newsrooms. Thus, burnout not only compromises personal well-being and collective performance but also affects the civic mission of journalism. The second objective identifies and evaluates coping strategies at individual, organisational and sectoral levels. By integrating the findings through the frameworks of job demands-resource and conservation of resources, this review highlights burnout as a systemic imbalance between increasing demands and insufficient resources. The study concludes that effective responses require multi-level coordination to foster sustainable and mentally healthy journalism.

Keywords: Burnout, Mental Health, Journalists, Systematic Review, Prisma 2020.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, journalistic burnout has become a major occupational health crisis with implications that transcend individual well-being and affect the very sustainability of journalism as a democratic institution. Burnout is commonly defined as a syndrome resulting from chronic, unmanaged work-related stress, characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism or depersonalisation and a diminished sense of professional efficacy. This definition underscores the multidimensional nature of burnout: overwhelming fatigue, detachment from work or the people one serves, and a sense of incompetence or lack of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

In journalism, these symptoms are alarmingly prevalent due to relentless deadlines, traumatic news coverage, job insecurity and public scrutiny. Burnout among journalists is not only a personal health problem, but poses a systemic threat by undermining journalistic quality, increasing staff turnover and eroding the ability of the press to fulfil its civic duties (Reinardy, 2011; Jung & Kim, 2012). Moreover, in recent years, the magnitude of this problem has intensified, making it necessary to re-examine burnout in the contemporary media ecosystem.

Since the last major systematic review of journalist burnout (MacDonald et al., 2016), newsrooms have undergone profound structural changes that have fundamentally altered the volume and intensity of stressors facing journalists. These transformations risk rendering traditional theories and coping strategies insufficient to explain or mitigate the current mental health crisis in the profession. Therefore, up-to-date and rigorous research is warranted to capture how burnout now manifests itself in journalists' lives and work, and what can be done about it.

The most recent literature (2020-2025) includes new theoretical frameworks with which it is possible to explain burnout among journalists more accurately. Notable among the new models are the job demands and resources theory (JD-R) and the conservation of resources theory (COR). The JD-R model posits that burnout is the result of an imbalance between excessive job demands and inadequate resources to meet those demands. Today's newsrooms face increasing demands like constant deadlines, content for multiple platforms, and audience interaction. Meanwhile, essential resources such as time, personnel, and organisational support have remained limited. Prolonged exposure to high demands, combined with insufficient opportunities for recovery or support, creates a cumulative stress that leads to burnout and cynicism (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Similarly, COR theory suggests that individuals strive to acquire and protect resources. Burnout develops when these resources are chronically threatened or depleted (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Recent studies extend these models by examining interactive and multilevel factors: not only the resilience of the individual, but also how workplace structures, technologies and cultures contribute to resource loss or gain. For example, prolonged 'always-on' workflows and digital surveillance can overwhelm journalists' ability to adapt, making emotional exhaustion an almost inevitable outcome of certain work environments (Kim & Buzzelli, 2024).

These new perspectives force an examination of the structural conditions under which news is written. They recognise that a journalist's burnout is often a rational response to an unsustainable situation, where job design, organisational norms or industry pressures chronically demand more than a human being can give.

It is important to note that Maslach's three classic dimensions of burnout remain the basic criteria for its measurement. However, recent studies note that these symptoms overlap with depression and vary across cultures in terms of their expression or boundary, complicating cross-cultural comparisons (Noor & Hameed, 2024; Kim & Buzzelli, 2024). Overall, the theoretical shift emphasises that burnout is not simply an individual failure, but a reflection of systemic stress imbalances, requiring broader organisational and sectoral changes in addition to individual interventions.

In the digital age, new stressors have reshaped journalistic work in ways that create even new possibilities for burnout. The most important of these is the regime of forced hyperconnectivity in the media (Šimunjak, 2025). Journalists today are expected to be continuously connected -monitoring information sources, interacting on social media, responding to the public- blurring any boundaries between work and personal life. This expectation of "always being available", along with real-time metrics and public feedback, has intensified the emotional labour (Grandey, 2000). For journalists, this means projecting calm and impartiality in the midst of online harassment, public criticism or exposure to graphic content.

Studies have found that the demands of emotional labour significantly amplify the risk of burnout among journalists, especially when they must constantly absorb negativity or suppress natural emotional responses (Guo, 2022). For example, being attacked by trolls or inundated with distressing images requires journalists to exert extra emotional effort just to do their jobs, which depletes their psychological resources over time. Guo (2022) showed that journalists who engage more frequently in superficial acting out tend to report greater burnout, although, on a positive note, those who employ problem-focused coping strategies can partly mitigate this effect.

In the same vein, Kim and Buzzelli (2024) found that hyperconnectivity, work intensity and emotional exposure form a "triangle" of interaction that fuels contemporary burnout mechanisms. In other words, being constantly connected and visible fuels increased pace and volume of work and increased emotional vulnerability, which -taken together- produce a potent recipe for emotional exhaustion. This new evidence makes clear that journalistic burnout cannot be understood in isolation from the digital environment. The logic of continuous connectivity is eroding the traditional safeguards that once helped journalists recharge.

Added to these circumstances, the precariousness of employment and exposure to traumatic material increases the likelihood that journalists will suffer from burnout. Economic instability in the media industry has led to widespread job insecurity, reliance on freelance or short-term contracts and chronic understaffing (Shah & Shah, 2024). Reporters who fear layoffs or lack stable contracts often work under constant anxiety, have less institutional support and are pressured to take on excessive workloads, all of which contribute to the accumulation of stress. Studies in South Asia, for example, highlight that insecure working conditions amplify burnout by adding financial strain and reducing available safety nets for journalists (Shah & Shah, 2024; Alam & Steyn, 2024).

In addition, many journalists routinely face graphic or distressing assignments -such as covering violence or disasters- that can lead to secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue (De Jong & Kotišová, 2024). Compassion fatigue has been documented especially among war correspondents, police reporters and those covering crises such as COVID-19 (Dworznic, 2018; Tandoc et al., 2022). During this latest crisis, these stressors skyrocketed: journalists faced reporting overload, abrupt shifts to remote work, staff cuts in newsrooms, and

personal fears for health in the face of a global crisis (Tandoc et al., 2022; Hoak, 2023).

Amid the confinements, the combination of isolation and incessant COVID-19-related news created what some journalists have described as a breaking point, where burnout and cynicism became widespread. This is attested to empirically; surveys consistently reveal high rates of burnout among journalists both during and after COVID-19. For example, in a study of Latin American journalists in 2020-21, more than 70% reported high levels of stress and almost half had considered leaving journalism due to related burnout (Chew et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, in South and Southeast Asia, burnout accounts for much of the notable exodus from the profession. In Indonesia, a recent survey revealed that work overload, poor pay and loss of professional meaning were strong indicators of journalists' intention to leave the profession (Setiawati & Thomas, 2024). This pattern is repeated in neighbouring contexts: for example, among women journalists in Afghanistan facing extreme threats and stress, burnout and depersonalisation related to exhaustion have led many to consider leaving journalism altogether (Siddiqi et al., 2022). Similarly, in Bangladesh, journalists who experienced severe burnout amidst pay cuts and staff shortages during COVID-19 showed significantly higher resignation intentions (Alam & Steyn, 2024).

However, it is important to recognise that it is very difficult to quantify the precise incidence of burnout in various countries due to the great challenge posed by methodological discrepancies. Researchers use a variety of instruments each with different cut-off criteria, making direct comparisons difficult (Gascón et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the consensus in recent literature is that a large proportion of journalists worldwide report at least moderate to high levels of burnout symptoms, especially in the dimension of emotional exhaustion. This emerging global picture underscores that burnout is a universal challenge in journalism and that it may manifest itself differently according to local conditions.

Significance of the Study

As can be seen, in recent years, the landscape of journalistic work has changed rapidly, as have the stress factors associated with burnout. However, research findings on this topic are scattered across disciplines and regions, and interventions remain largely uncoordinated. There is a clear need for an updated systematic review synthesising the evidence from 2000 to 2025 on two critical fronts: (1) the impact of burnout on journalists' quality of life and quality of work, and (2) coping strategies at individual, organisational and sectoral levels.

Specific Objective 1 (SO1) aims to examine the consequences of burnout on health, job tenure and quality of journalistic work. To this end, questions RQ1 and RQ2 aim to identify, on the one hand, the repercussions of burnout in terms of quality of life, physical and mental well-being, social ties and continuity in the profession (RQ1); and, on the other hand, its impact on the quality of journalistic work, including how it affects the accuracy of information, creativity, professional ethics and newsroom climate (RQ2).

Specific Objective 2 (SO2) aims to systematise the coping strategies described in the literature. This objective is concretised through questions RQ3, RQ4 and RQ5, which aim to identify, which individual strategies journalists use to mitigate burnout (RQ3); which organisational strategies have been documented and what level of perceived or reported effectiveness is attributed to them (RQ4); and which sectoral strategies show the greatest potential for sustainability and replicability in various contexts (RQ5).

In doing so, this review aims to update and harmonise the empirical evidence on journalistic burnout and to contribute to the design of evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies that strengthen the mental health and professional sustainability of contemporary journalism.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic review is a rigorous, transparent and reproducible method to identify, evaluate and synthesise in a structured way the available scientific literature on one or more research questions that have been previously defined clearly and explicitly. This allows for a coherent mapping of existing empirical contributions, identifying trends, thematic gaps, recurrent methodological approaches and future research opportunities, thus increasing the validity and usefulness of the results obtained (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Gough et al., 2012).

To ensure methodological rigour and transparency of the process, this review follows the guidelines set out in the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). This method provides a clear structure for documenting each step of the process and is particularly useful in social science and communication contexts, where methodological designs are often diverse. The full protocol has been registered in the Open Science Framework (see Appendix 4). The most important steps are detailed below.

Bibliographic Search Strategy

The search strategy was carefully designed to balance comprehensiveness and conceptual precision, ensuring that the retrieved studies explicitly addressed burnout in the professional field of journalism. To avoid an unstructured or overly broad approach, Boolean equations combined profession-specific descriptors (“journalist*”, “newsroom”, “reporter”, “editor”) with validated theoretical and measurement terms for professional burnout (e.g., “Maslach Burnout Inventory”, “Copenhagen Burnout Inventory”, “Oldenburg Burnout Inventory”, “occupational burnout”, “professional burnout”). The inclusion of proximity operators (e.g. NEAR/3 or W/3) ensured semantic relevance, while complementary terms related to emotion regulation and coping were added to capture empirical studies addressing burnout mechanisms and interventions. The time frame (2000-2025), document type (peer-reviewed articles) and language (English) were aligned with the objectives of the review and international reporting standards, ensuring both reproducibility and specificity of the search process (Methley et al., 2014; Page et al., 2021). Specifically, WoS returned 170 results, while Scopus, 37 results.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure methodological rigour and conceptual consistency, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this systematic review were designed according to the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021) and guided by the PICOS framework (Methley et al., 2014). These criteria aimed to delimit a corpus of studies that specifically addressed burnout among professional journalists, excluding tangential constructs such as stress, compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress, unless explicitly operationalised as burnout.

By defining a homogenous population and ensuring the inclusion of empirical research using validated measurement tools (e.g. MBI, CBI, OLBI) or rigorous qualitative operationalisations, the review sought to maximise the comparability and validity of the evidence extracted. Inclusion parameters were deliberately broad in methodological terms to capture the multidimensional nature of burnout in journalism, while exclusion parameters ensured that only those studies that provided analyzable empirical data on consequences or coping strategies were retained.

Time (2000-2025) and linguistic (English language) boundaries were applied to capture the evolution of journalistic burnout research within the broader developments of occupational health and the transformation of digital media. The year 2000 was established as a starting point because it marks the beginning of the intensification of restructuring, convergence and casualisation of newsrooms linked to the digital transition, conditions that shaped subsequent research on journalists’ emotional and professional well-being. This period also coincides with the gradual emergence of empirical studies explicitly addressing burnout and related syndromes in journalism during the first decade of the 21st century (e.g. Reinardy, 2011). The endpoint (2025) warrants the inclusion of the most recent evidence on post-COVID-19 newsroom dynamics, hybrid work models and organisational wellbeing initiatives.

The restriction to English-language publications was intended to ensure the inclusion of peer-reviewed literature with global visibility and methodological transparency, in line with international standards for systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021). The restriction to open access articles aimed to enhance transparency and ensure full access to results, potentially reducing the risk of missing or selectively reported data (Haddaway, 2018). In the following table, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are explicitly stated:

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Systematic Review

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
P - Population	Professional journalists in print, radio, television, digital/online media, podcasts or freelance; newsroom and field/reporting contexts; adult samples.	Journalism students; PR, communication and marketing professionals; generic ‘media workers’ without a definable journalistic role; moderators or content creators not engaged in journalism; mixed samples without disaggregated data for journalists.
I/E - Interest/exposure phenomenon	Empirical studies explicitly assessing or defining burnout in journalists (validated scales: MBI, CBI, OLBI or rigorous qualitative operationalisations); studies reporting on the consequences of burnout (quality of life and quality of journalistic work);	Studies focusing exclusively on stress, engagement, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress or moral harm without

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
	studies describing coping strategies (individual and organisational/collective).	measuring/defining burnout; purely theoretical/editorial content; instrument validations not involving journalists; interventions not related to burnout or coping in journalism; outcomes not linked to burnout.
C - Comparator	Any valid comparator or grouping (e.g., low vs. high demands; presence vs. absence of resources; groups by medium, role, gender, contract type; previous/past periods; cross-national comparisons). Descriptive designs that do not include comparators are also possible.	N/A (lack of comparator alone is not an exclusion criterion).
O - Results	Impact: quality of life (mental/physical health, sleep, intention/exhaustion) and quality of journalistic work (accuracy/errors, productivity, creativity, ethical practice, newsroom climate). Coping strategy: type (individual/organisational; problem-focused/emotion-focused/evasive) and perceived/measured effectiveness.	Results not related to burnout; insufficient detail on results (no extractable data or codable qualitative evidence); purely methodological results with no relevance to the phenomenon of burnout among journalists.
S - Study design	Quantitative: cross-sectional, longitudinal, cohort, case-control, time-series, quasi-experiments, pre- and post-evaluations. Qualitative: interviews, focus groups, ethnographies, thematic/narrative analysis. Mixed methods: convergent/explanatory/exploratory. Articles that have been peer-reviewed and published in open access journals. Master's or doctoral theses that are specifically focused on the topic and include empirical evidence were also included.	Editorials, letters, commentaries, opinion pieces; protocols without results; systematic reviews (retained only for citation searching); case reports without a clear assessment of attrition; instrument validations that do not involve journalists; conference abstracts without full text.
Limits (applied in all PICOS)	Language: English only. Timeframe: 2000-2025. Access: open access full text (gold/hybrid OA, green through repositories, PMC or authorised preprints substantially matching the accepted version).	Non-English; published outside the period 2000-2025; full text not available in open access (documented separately for transparency, but excluded from data mining).

Study Selection

The identification and selection of studies was carried out according to the methodological recommendations of PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021), ensuring the traceability and reproducibility of each decision. In the initial search phase, a total of 207 records were retrieved: 170 papers from WoS and 37 from Scopus.

After eliminating 25 duplicates, 182 unique records remained, which were subjected to a preliminary screening phase (phase 1) based on reading the title and abstract. In this phase, the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined in the PICOS matrix were applied. As a result, 176 studies were disregarded for not meeting the thematic or population requirements: 116 for “wrong outcome” (i.e. addressing phenomena other than burnout, such as work-related stress, compassion fatigue or emotional exhaustion not explicitly operationalised as burnout) and 60 for “wrong population” (focusing on related groups, such as communication professionals, community managers or journalism students, but not practising journalists).

The remaining six studies were assessed in phase 2 (full-text review). All of them met the inclusion criteria and were relevant to the review. Following the recommendations for systematic reviews by Haddaway et al. (2015) and Bramer et al. (2017), a complementary search was conducted in Google Scholar in order to maximise the completeness of the corpus and to ensure that potentially relevant open-access empirical work was not omitted

due to indexing limitations in WoS and Scopus, The search terms used were “burnout” AND “journalists”, restricted to the period 2000–2025, and filtered manually to include only peer-reviewed empirical studies that met the same inclusion and exclusion criteria previously applied -namely: open-access availability, English language, empirical design, and focus on burnout of professional journalists.

This search was carried out manually, screening the first 250 results by relevance and applying the same two-phase selection process (title/abstract, then full-text review). Nine additional studies were identified that met all methodological and thematic requirements and were not duplicated in the initial WoS/Scopus searches. Interestingly, Google Scholar did not retrieve the same six articles found through the earlier database searches, suggesting limited overlap and reinforcing the importance of complementary searching strategies. The final corpus thus comprised 15 empirical studies. The complete process of identification, selection, eligibility and inclusion is detailed in Figure 1:

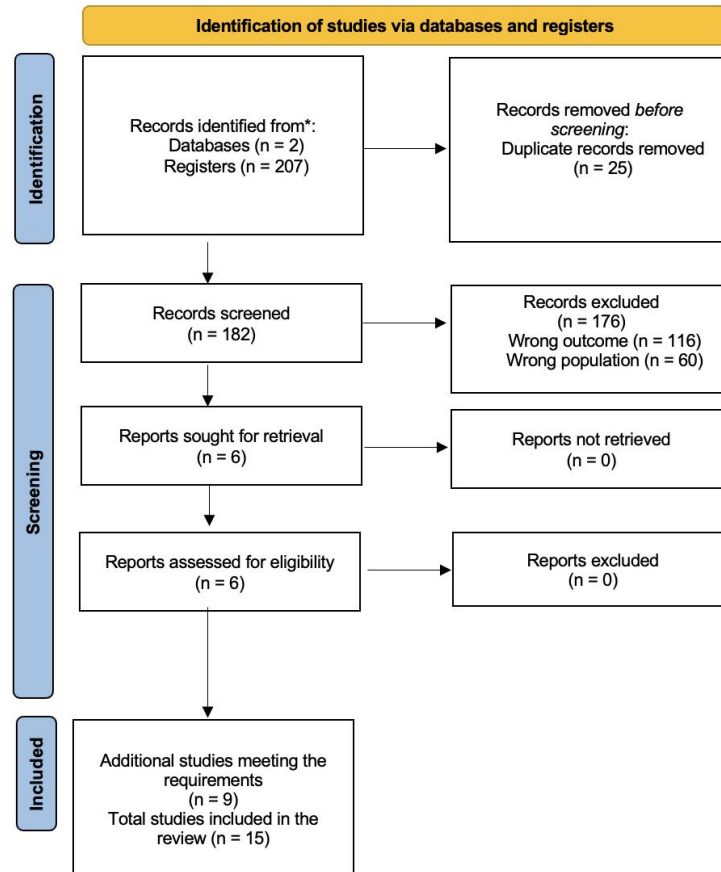


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram with the Papers Analyzed for this Systematic Review
Details of the 15 analysed texts can be found in Appendix 1.

Data Extraction and Validation

From each of the 15 included studies, a total of 17 variables were systematically extracted using a structured Excel template, specifically designed ex ante to ensure alignment with the review’s two specific objectives and their associated research questions. The use of a structured template aimed to enhance conceptual coherence, minimise the risk of bias during data extraction, and facilitate consistency in the organisation and analysis of the evidence. To ensure its validity and functionality, the template was piloted on two articles prior to full data extraction. This preliminary test phase allowed the refinement of variable definitions and the clarification of coding criteria, thus reducing interpretive ambiguity and enhancing operational clarity (Booth et al., 2016; Higgins et al., 2022).

The variables were grouped into four thematic blocks, each serving a specific analytical purpose:

1. Descriptive variables. This block included six variables -article title, author(s), journal, year of publication, DOI, and country or region of analysis- which were necessary to document the bibliographic and geographical

profile of the included studies and to assess the diversity and representativeness of the corpus.

2. Methodological variables. To evaluate the empirical robustness and comparability of the studies, six variables related to design and sample characteristics were collected: study design, data collection technique(s), sample size, type of media outlet, professional role of the participants, type of contract, and proportion of female participants. These variables enabled the identification of methodological patterns, gaps in sampling, and potential sources of bias or underrepresentation.

3. Consequences of attrition (SO1). Two targeted variables were included to capture the effects of chronic stress by distinguishing between its impact on (a) journalists' quality of life and (b) the quality of the journalistic work produced. This separation was analytically relevant to trace differentiated outcomes at the personal and professional levels, in direct response to the first specific objective.

4. Coping strategies (SO2). Three additional variables addressed coping mechanisms documented in the literature, categorised into individual, organisational, and sectoral levels. This tripartite division was designed to capture the multilevel nature of support systems and their varying degrees of effectiveness, as required by the second specific objective.

To streamline the location of relevant content, the tool Notebook was employed. However, in adherence to principles of transparency and rigour, all extracted information was manually verified by the author using the original full texts. This dual approach -technological support with manual validation- ensured the fidelity of data and full correspondence between source material and extracted variables (Sutton et al., 2019).

As the review was conducted by a single researcher, internal quality control mechanisms were implemented to strengthen the reliability of the process. First, the template was refined through initial piloting, as recommended in single-reviewer protocols (Booth et al., 2016; Higgins et al., 2022). Second, a detailed decision log was maintained to document coding decisions, conceptual clarifications, and interpretive resolutions, thus enhancing traceability and transparency (Nowell et al., 2017). Third, a validation self-audit was performed by re-coding 25% of the sample after a two-week interval to assess intra-rater consistency and identify any potential transcription errors or misclassifications (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Finally, all numerical values, author citations, and topic classifications were cross-checked with the original publications until full consistency was achieved. This rigorous verification procedure aimed to ensure the auditability and reproducibility of the dataset, even in the absence of a second reviewer, in accordance with established standards for single-author reviews in the fields of social sciences and communication studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hong et al., 2018).

Results of the MMAT for the Reviewed Studies

In order to critically assess the methodological quality of the reviewed studies, we resorted to MMAT. Developed by Pluye and colleagues (Pluye et al., 2009; Hong et al., 2018) at McGill University in Canada, this tool allows for the assessment of qualitative, quantitative and mixed studies by analysing the strengths and limitations in each of the studies to mitigate potential risk and improve transparency within the reviews. The latest version, MMAT 2018 (Hong et al., 2018), establishes a total of seven criteria: two of them apply to all studies, while the remaining five depend on the specific methodological framework.

In this case, the five qualitative studies in our review maintain a strong methodological consistency. Four studies met all seven qualitative criteria, while one -Šimunjak's study on digital disconnection- only partially met clarity of research questions, as the objectives were explicit, but formal research questions were not listed. Even so, this study showed clear alignment between data collection, analysis and interpretation, which mitigated concerns about construct clarity. Across the corpus, the qualitative approach and data collection methods were appropriate to the objectives, results were adequately derived from the data, interpretations were well grounded and internal consistency was evident.

As an example, Bossio and Holton substantiate their interpretations with abundant interview evidence when theorising about digital disconnection as a coping strategy. The remaining studies -Erdem and Beykoz, Passon and Siew- also met all qualitative criteria according to the net synthesis. Overall, the qualitative evidence base on journalists' burnout and coping appears methodologically sound, with only one minor shortcoming in reporting that does not undermine the credibility of their analyses.

In the nine quantitative descriptive studies assessed, three criteria were consistently met: clarity of the research questions, adequacy of the data collected to address those questions and adequacy of the statistical analyses employed. In contrast, the representativeness of the samples was the most problematic dimension: non-compliance is explicit in Katsiroumpa et al., Siswanti et al, Ntalampira and Bustamante-Granda et al. (each of which use convenience or purposive frames that prevent generalisability), while only partial compliance is

reported in Woldearegay, Zivković and Devjak, Božović et al., Hull and Gascón et al. The risk of bias due to non-response was also not sufficiently mitigated in many cases: “not met” in Zivković and Devjak, Božović et al., Katsiroumpa et al. and Siswanti et al.; “partially met” in Bustamante-Granda et al. and Gascón et al.; but “met” in Woldearegay, Hull and Ntalampira. Measurement adequacy was generally adequate, although partially met in Zivković and Devjak, Hull and Siswanti, usually due to customised or insufficiently validated instruments, while Gascón et al. used Spanish validated versions with acceptable reliability. Overall, the descriptive analyses employed are fit for purpose, but external validity is undermined by reliance on convenience/voluntary sampling and the presentation of incomplete denominators, precisely the weaknesses noted by the MMAT in criteria 4 and 6.

The application of the MMAT to the only mixed methods study resulted in full compliance with all criteria. The research questions were clearly articulated and the data were adequate to address them. Furthermore, the rationale for the use of a mixed design was explicit and well-founded, the integration of strands was clearly demonstrated, procedures for merging/connecting data were methodologically sound, and inferences were explicitly based on integrated evidence. Potential inconsistencies between strands were addressed reflexively and limitations were acknowledged without undermining validity. Overall, the study offers a methodologically sound and well-integrated contribution. Details of the bias analysis for each of the studies examined for this review can be found in Appendix 2.

Data Analysis

After completing data extraction for all variables, a systematic inductive-deductive thematic analysis was conducted following the guidelines of Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Braun and Clarke (2006). For this task, NVivo 12 software was used to ensure the traceability and transparency of the coding process. In the first stage, an open coding process was designed to generate preliminary categories by systematically listing recurring ideas, patterns and keywords across studies (Guest et al., 2012). In the second stage, these initial categories were refined, merged or subdivided through axial and selective coding, forming coherent thematic hierarchies (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). To improve validity, coding decisions were verified by iteratively comparing sources. Thematic saturation was also checked (Nowell et al., 2017). Finally, the synthesised information was aggregated into higher-order analytical themes that integrated conceptual, methodological and contextual dimensions, in line with best practice for qualitative systematic reviews (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

This review synthesises evidence from 15 empirical studies conducted between 2009 and 2025, surveying a total of 1538 journalists from six continents and diverse media contexts. The methodological distribution includes nine quantitative descriptive studies, five qualitative investigations and one mixed methods approach. Sample sizes range from 10 participants in qualitative explorations (Passon, 2009; Erdem & Beykoz, 2025) to 276 or 292 journalists in in-depth quantitative studies (Guo, 2020; Gascón et al., 2021). The methodological details of the studies analyzed can be found in Appendix 3. The temporal concentration of research after 2020 (eleven of the 15 studies) reflects the increased academic attention after COVID-19 and the accelerated digital transformation of journalism.

Impact on Quality of Life and Quality of Work (SO1)

Burnout impacts in many negative ways on the journalists who suffer from it. Symptoms often develop gradually and are initially attributed to normal work stress, which obscures its relationship to burnout syndrome (Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Gascón et al., 2021; Woldearegay, 2022).

From a physical point of view, documented symptoms include chronic fatigue -persisting even after rest-sleep disorders, headaches and gastrointestinal problems. One journalist even mentioned feeling “quite nauseous” when using social media in his personal life (Bossio & Holton, 2021). There is also a correlation with increased cardiovascular risk (hypertension), changes in diet or weight and musculoskeletal problems resulting from prolonged screen time and stress-related muscle tension. According to the literature, the somatisation of stress is remarkable (Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Guo, 2020; Gascón et al., 2021; Siew, 2024; Hull, 2024; Katsiroumpa et al., 2024; Božović et al., 2025) and sometimes journalists have to continue working even if they are ill. One journalist stated that his physical problems manifested themselves in the form of “anxiety, chronic back pain and abdominal fat”, all attributed to his work (Guo, 2020).

From an emotional perspective, the most frequently reported dimension is extreme exhaustion. Those

affected experience chronic emotional overload that depletes their inner resources and manifests itself in symptoms such as impatience, irritability and a general state of sadness. Surveys reveal a high prevalence of severe psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even risk of suicidal ideation (Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Guo, 2020; Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021; Gascón et al., 2021; Woldearegay, 2022; Siew, 2024; Hull, 2024; Katsiroumpa et al., 2024; Božović et al., 2025).

Such conditions show a high prevalence among journalists suffering from burnout. Among Greek journalists, 58.7 % of professionals showed a score ≥ 6 , attesting to high levels of burnout. Those journalists covering traumatic events showed higher vulnerability (Katsiroumpa et al., 2024). A study in Ecuador revealed that 11.2 % of the journalists evaluated showed symptoms related to post-traumatic stress disorder (Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021).

In addition, burnout ultimately undermines a sense of achievement and purpose. Journalists with a low level of personal achievement perceive themselves as having put in a great deal of effort without having received a commensurate reward in terms of goal attainment. At other times, professionals feel incapable of doing their job well. In turn, depersonalisation can lead to the development of impersonal or negative attitudes towards subjects or the public (Guo, 2020; Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021; Gascón et al., 2021; Woldearegay, 2022; Siew, 2024; Božović et al., 2025).

Having to be always connected also affects personal and family life, which is invaded and colonised by work. The intensity of 24/7 work and unstructured schedules undermine the balance between work and home, resulting in family conflicts, social isolation and loss of the ability to enjoy personal time (Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Guo, 2020; Bossio & Holton, 2021; Siew, 2024; Hull, 2024; Erdem & Beykoz, 2025; Šimunjak, 2025).

Burnout also affects social relationships. Hull's (2024) interviews with former sports broadcasters revealed that burnout-related irritability, emotional exhaustion and preoccupation with work damaged family relationships and social connections. Professionals described becoming emotionally unavailable to loved ones and also losing interest in activities they once enjoyed.

As a result, burnout is understandably a significant indicator of the desire to leave the job or even leave journalism altogether, with a consequent negative impact on talent retention in the industry. This desire is particularly high among younger or less experienced journalists, who are more susceptible to burnout, low pay and long working hours (Guo, 2020; Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021; Siew, 2024; Erdem & Beykoz, 2025; Šimunjak, 2025). A former sports presenter said that, as he approached his return to work after sick leave, he felt "panic" and concluded: "No one should panic about going to work" (Hull, 2024).

Quality of life is also undermined by the perception of inadequate financial compensation for effort, as well as lack of recognition and financial insecurity. Wage anxiety and the need to seek additional work are recurrent complaints, but also realities that affect quality of life (Passon, 2009; Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Gascón et al., 2021; Siew, 2024; Hull, 2024; Erdem & Beykoz, 2025). Hull notes that one of the journalists interviewed noted that his salary was "about the same as fast food employees" working alongside the TV station. In his research, almost 80 % of the participants cited low pay as the reason for leaving local sports journalism. In addition, inadequate pay forces many journalists to postpone important personal decisions, including starting a family, a phenomenon particularly evident among women (Passon, 2009; Hull, 2024).

Woldearegay (2022) notes that in fragile national ecologies such as Ethiopia, burnout can arise from newsroom routines that deviate from norms, the production of controversial media material and a "climate of fear and instability". In this context, organisational support failed to have a significant effect on burnout, as the study details.

Moreover, the effects of isolation are aggravated by irregular working hours and constant demands to be always connected. Both of these demands disrupt normal social rhythms. Journalists reported difficulties in maintaining friendships and romantic relationships due to unpredictable availability and emotional exhaustion from work demands (Passon, 2009; Bossio & Holton, 2019; Guo, 2020; Siew, 2024; Erdem & Beykoz, 2025; and Šimunjak, 2025).

Career drop-out represents the most serious personal consequence. Several participants in Hull's study described the profession as a "dream job" at first, but eventually realised that it would not be a lifelong career due to the emotional exhaustion it generated (Hull, 2024). Burned-out journalists reported a loss of motivation/passion and felt physically and emotionally exhausted, which implied an inability to maintain a positive attitude (Hull, 2024).

Impact on Work Quality and Job Performance

Burnout has a progressive and multifaceted impact on journalistic performance, beginning with a subtle

decline in attention and escalating to a systemic compromise of quality. Journalists experiencing burnout often engage in what Hull (2024) describes as “minimum effort”, producing content that is functionally sufficient, but lacking in creativity, depth or analytical rigour. This reduced engagement is not immediately apparent to the audience, but manifests itself through simpler reporting, less critical scrutiny and over-reliance on non-original sources (Hull, 2024).

Cognitive functions that are essential for quality journalism -information seeking, verification or editorial judgement- are also impaired. This reduction in perceived and actual competence correlates with hesitancy in decision-making, self-doubt and increased vulnerability to factual inaccuracies (Guo, 2020; Siew, 2024; Božović et al. 2025).

Feeling burned out also leads to abandoning investigative or whistle-blowing journalism. Affected journalists often experience a loss of motivation, passion and professional purpose (Siew, 2024). These psychological deficits, along with cynical attitudes towards the profession (Erdem & Beykoz, 2025), lead to avoidance of complex or controversial topics in favour of less demanding content. In high-pressure environments characterised by tight deadlines and scarce resources, many journalists report being unable to conduct in-depth investigations or pursue original angles, describing the attempt as “mission impossible” (Guo, 2020).

As a result, there is an increasing reliance on pre-made content. Journalists suffering from burnout report reproducing press releases out of exhaustion and disillusionment (Hull, 2024). Speed and volume thus prevail over quality. Understandably, this leads to homogenised results and undermines the normative function of critical enquiry that journalism should perform because when emotional fatigue conflates with diminished ethical resilience, it increases the risk of biased reporting (Siew, 2024). Erdem & Beykoz (2025) note that burnout can erode journalists’ sense of “public duty”, a cornerstone of journalism’s civic responsibility. Conflict between personal values and organisational demands exacerbates this alienation, especially in contexts where economic gain is prioritised over purpose (Gascón et al., 2021; Siew, 2024).

The damage goes beyond the individual dimension and affects the newsroom as a whole. Burned-out journalists are more likely to disengage from teamwork, avoid collaboration and perpetuate toxic cultures of passivity and isolation (Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Hull, 2024). High attrition rates lead to staff shortages, forcing journalists to absorb additional workloads. This, in turn, increases their own risk of burnout (Reinardy, 2011; Hull, 2024). As solidarity erodes, so does the collective resilience of the newsroom.

Moral integrity is also compromised. Pressure to meet quotas or align with editorial “brands” encourages shortcuts and internal ethical conflicts (Woldearegay, 2022; Siew, 2024). Journalists have expressed guilt over practices such as failing to protect sources or using covert methods under pressure, behaviours contrary to professional standards (Guo, 2020).

However, most studies remain correlational rather than causal in scope. Scholars caution that causality cannot yet be established with certainty without longitudinal or experimental designs (Ntalampira, 2017; Katsiroumpa et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the consistency of findings across diverse contexts underscores the urgency for targeted interventions and a reassessment of organisational norms that perpetuate emotional exhaustion and ethical compromise.

Coping Strategies (SO2)

Individual Coping Strategies

Journalists exposed to high emotional demands and structural precariousness often resort to individual coping mechanisms to manage burnout. These strategies, while varied in form and effectiveness, generally cluster around three key dimensions: setting physical and digital boundaries, activating psychological and emotional self-regulation, and drawing on internalised professional identity and resilience. While these mechanisms reflect a degree of agency, the literature suggests that they often function as compensatory measures in contexts that lack institutional support.

One widespread strategy involves strategic digital disengagement, aimed primarily at mitigating social network fatigue, a phenomenon intertwined with, but not identical to, burnout-related symptoms such as emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Bossio & Holton, 2021). Common tactics include reducing personal posts, limiting interaction with unfamiliar users and reducing total screen time (Bossio & Holton, 2021). They also employ technical barriers, such as muting or blocking abusive accounts to insulate themselves from online hostility, and exchanges that are emotionally draining (Šimunjak, 2025).

At the same time, journalists adopt physical separation strategies to better discriminate between work and personal life. The strain of being continuously connected is actively managed by imposing clear limits on working hours (Bossio & Holton, 2021). Examples include turning off work phones, storing them out of physical reach

outside working hours or uninstalling professional apps such as Twitter (now X) during holidays to ensure mental space and psychological distance (Šimunjak, 2025).

Emotional and behavioural self-regulation is another way of coping with burnout. Some journalists engage in escapist behaviours such as avoiding television news or distancing themselves from journalistic content outside working hours (Hull, 2024), which may offer some short-term relief, although in the long run their effectiveness remains uncertain. Physical exercise and mindfulness are more adaptive forms of self-care. Frequent exercise, for example, has been associated with reduced symptoms of burnout, while mindfulness reduces stress and improves emotional regulation (Katsiroumpa et al., 2024).

Not all forms of coping are positive. Emotion-focused avoidant strategies, such as excessive distraction or substance use, exacerbate burnout rather than alleviating it, as they increase levels of exhaustion and cynicism (Ntalampira, 2017; Guo, 2020; Božović et al., 2025). Conversely, active coping strategies -such as planning and problem solving- lead to better emotional adjustment and less psychological stress (Guo, 2020).

Resilience operates as a key internal resource in reducing burnout. Journalists with higher levels of resilience show lower burnout scores (Katsiroumpa et al., 2024). In certain contexts, such as Turkish journalists, reframing journalistic work as a “sacred profession” or public service helps to maintain motivation and counteract emotional exhaustion (Erdem & Beykoz, 2025). Similarly, age and experience appear to play a protective role: veteran journalists tend to possess more refined coping skills than their younger colleagues, enabling them to navigate adversity more effectively (Siswanti, 2020; Hull, 2024).

Burnout leads some journalists to make drastic changes in their careers. Taking on new challenges or changing roles can serve as a mechanism to “revitalise” the professional routine and regain a sense of engagement (Hull, 2024). This demonstrates that adaptation may also require reorganising the professional environment, rather than just changing emotional reactions.

Ultimately, although individual strategies offer partial protection, evidence suggests that their effectiveness is conditional and uneven. They often work in the absence of institutional safeguards, placing undue responsibility on journalists to manage systemic dysfunctions individually. This asymmetry underlines the need for complementary organisational and sectoral strategies to address the root causes of burnout, rather than merely palliate its symptoms.

Organisational Coping Strategies

The reviewed literature confirms that structural conditions -such as excessive workload, insufficient staffing, low pay, lack of autonomy and poor management- are key predictors of emotional exhaustion and reduced performance (Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021; Gascón et al., 2021; Woldearegay, 2022).

A key organisational intervention is to restructure workloads and redistribute responsibilities to avoid chronic overload. Redistributing tasks and periodically reviewing workloads is strongly recommended (Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Hull, 2024). Journalists frequently mentioned the need to “do more with less” as one of the main factors leading to burnout, especially in under-resourced newsrooms (Siew, 2024). Overwork, along with understaffing and low pay, has consistently been identified as a determinant of stress and burnout (MacDonald et al., 2016; Hull, 2024).

The humanisation of management emerges as a crucial qualitative demand. Generation Z journalists interviewed by Siew (2024) call for leaders who “act human” and adopt a mindset that people are above product. These requests involve regular and deliberate check-ins, not only after traumatic events, but also during routine operations, with questions such as “how can I help” (Siew, 2024). However, journalists emphasised the importance of such concern being shown as genuine and not merely a superficial courtesy. Another trust-building measure mentioned by journalists was to communicate the organisation’s decisions transparently (Siew, 2024).

Promoting the emotional well-being of journalists should therefore be embedded in the very fabric of the organisation. This includes the provision of free therapy or counselling on site, especially during crises, and the institutionalisation of ‘mental health days’ that do not affect regular paid leave (Hull, 2024).

Formal mentoring programmes are another organisational tool with great potential. Pairing experienced journalists with early-career reporters helps combat isolation and provides practical support in dealing with job stressors (Hull, 2024). However, the effectiveness of such initiatives depends on generational alignment, as mentors who do not understand the pressures of the digital age may offer guidance that is perceived as outdated or even irrelevant (Bossio & Holton, 2021; Hull, 2024).

Having some autonomy is essential to support greater psychological well-being. Job design should empower journalists with discretion over how they manage their tasks, as autonomy is positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively correlated with burnout (Gascón et al., 2021; Woldearegay, 2022). Respect for

boundaries is equally essential; managers should refrain from contacting employees during their days off and avoid fostering a culture of constant availability (Hull, 2024; Šimunjak, 2025).

Values congruence within the newsroom also moderates burnout. Journalists become demoralised when organisational practices conflict with professed ethical or civic values, especially when there is a perceived “profit over purpose” mindset (Gascón et al., 2021; Hull, 2024). Cultivating ethical alignment, recognising professional contributions and offering both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are protective factors against emotional burnout and cynicism (Gascón et al., 2021; Hull, 2024).

However, implementation of these measures remains inconsistent. Multiple sources highlight the gap between the needs identified by journalists and the actual responses of organisations (Guo, 2020; Hull, 2024). Management resistance, lack of training, budget constraints and the persistence of a culture of denial of burnout pose significant obstacles. In this regard, it is worth noting that burnout is still largely seen as an individual problem rather than a structural condition demanding proactive organisational responsibility (Gascón et al., 2021).

In short: effective organisational strategies to mitigate burnout in journalism must be systemic, preventive and policy-based, rather than symbolic gestures. While various interventions, such as workload audits, transparent leadership, coaching and mentoring, have been suggested and partially implemented in some contexts, evidence suggests that these remain underdeveloped and unevenly adopted. Without sustained institutional commitment, burnout will continue to undermine both the well-being of journalists and the integrity of the profession.

Sectoral Coping Strategies

Addressing burnout in journalism also requires coordinated responses at the sectoral level that transcend individual and organisational efforts. The literature reviewed identifies three key areas of intervention: public policy and legal frameworks, institutional and civil society strengthening, and journalism education reforms. Most of them remain under-implemented and are stated as necessary but have not materialised.

Scholars emphasise the need for protective statutes and legislation to ensure the working conditions of journalists, especially in high-risk or poorly regulated environments (Erdem & Beykoz, 2025). Empirical research suggests that the results of studies focusing on burnout can inform policy-making to improve working conditions in the sector (Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021). While none of the sources reviewed indicate the implementation of a comprehensive national policy to this end, the importance of state regulation and early intervention mechanisms is consistently stressed (Woldearegay, 2022).

In addition, the literature argues for greater adoption of occupational health practices at the sectoral level, including early detection of symptoms and specific training for journalists covering high-risk assignments (Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021). Recognition of the civic mission of journalism strengthens the case for institutional safeguards that ensure sustainable and impartial conditions (Erdem & Beykoz, 2025). Isolated instances of public support for research on burnout, as noted by Gascón et al. (2021), point to an emerging but fragmented recognition of the issue at the political level.

Several sources stress that trade unions and civil society organisations also need to play a greater role in institutionalising journalism as a protected and sustainable profession (Erdem & Beykoz, 2025). Proposals include developing permanent preventive programmes involving both staff and management.

In addition, academics advocate regulatory measures to manage digital hyper-connectivity, suggesting that legal mechanisms can support journalists’ right to disconnect (Šimunjak, 2025), although the literature reviewed does not report the full implementation of such laws.

Similarly, the training of journalists should evolve in order to better equip future professionals for the challenges facing the profession. Faculties are encouraged to incorporate self-care and psychological resilience competencies into curricula, as current provision is often insufficient (Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021; Katsiroumpa et al., 2024). To prepare students realistically, transparency around low pay, job instability and psychological stress is considered essential (Hull, 2024). Practical training, including writing simulations and fast-paced assignments, is also recommended to bridge the gap between academic environments and industry pressures (Hull, 2024).

While these recommendations are widely supported, the literature confirms that their systemic application remains limited. Mitigating attrition across the sector remains an aspiration rather than an institutionalised reality, highlighting the need for robust and enforceable frameworks that span legal, organisational and pedagogical dimensions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic review confirm that burnout in journalism transcends the individual clinical domain and constitutes a structural mismatch between increasing professional demands and stagnant or declining resources. This dynamic is consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical frameworks (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Kim & Buzzelli, 2024).

At the personal level, burnout correlates strongly with physical impairments (e.g., insomnia, chronic pain, hypertension) and psychological disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD symptoms), in accordance with prior studies highlighting overlaps and operational ambiguities between burnout and depression (Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Guo, 2020; Noor & Hameed, 2024; Kim & Buzzelli, 2024; Božović et al., 2025). Additionally, sustained burnout is associated with family conflict, social disengagement, and declining professional commitment (Bossio & Holton, 2021; Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021; Siew, 2024; Hull, 2024), supporting earlier evidence on the erosion of work continuity (Reinardy, 2011; Jung & Kim, 2012). These findings are in direct correspondence with the diagnosis presented in the introduction: enforced hyperconnectivity, perpetual work engagement, and incessant interaction with the public exacerbate emotional labor and catalyze a cycle of resource depletion (Grandey, 2000; Bossio & Holton, 2021; Guo, 2022; Kim & Buzzelli, 2024).

Professionally, burnout undermines the quality of journalistic output: affected individuals reduce effort, avoid complex investigations, and struggle with verification tasks, which compromises information integrity and inhibits creativity (Guo, 2020; Gascón et al., 2021; Siew, 2024; Hull, 2024; Božović et al., 2025). These effects mirror previously reported links between burnout and error rates, job dissatisfaction, and intent to quit (Reinardy, 2011; Jung & Kim, 2012). Organisational consequences include high turnover, emotionally disengaged work environments, and colder workplace cultures (Woldearegay, 2022; Hull, 2024), reinforcing the idea that journalists' mental health is a foundational condition for sustainable information ecosystems (MacDonald et al., 2016; Gascón et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 crisis further amplified these pressures by triggering information overload, resource cuts, and social isolation through mandatory telework. The constant exposure to health-related content intensified emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Tandoc et al., 2022; Hoak, 2023). In South and Southeast Asia, high levels of burnout-related attrition linked to workload and loss of professional meaning have been reported (Setiawati & Thomas, 2024; Alam & Steyn, 2024). These results align with earlier observations on the role of precariousness and insufficient institutional support in exacerbating burnout (Šimunjak, 2025; Shah & Shah, 2024). All this reinforces the multi-scale reading: without tangible organisational resources (time, staff, autonomy, recognition), the chronic demands of the digital ecosystem accelerate the deterioration of journalistic well-being and quality (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Kim & Buzzelli, 2024).

Regarding coping mechanisms, individual strategies such as digital disconnection, the delimitation of space and time between work and personal life, as well as psychological self-care through physical exercise or mindfulness practices stand out. However, these largely target symptoms rather than structural causes (Bossio & Holton, 2021; Gascón et al., 2021; Guo, 2022; Šimunjak, 2025). Research shows that problem-focused coping (seeking resources, renegotiating tasks, asking for operational support) proves more effective than emotion-focused strategies. This echoes the JD-R/COR premise that resource gain can interrupt the loss spiral (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

At the organisational level, proposed solutions include redistributing workload, empathetic leadership, formal mental health resources (e.g. debriefing after traumatic coverage), and mentoring (Zivkovic & Devjak, 2014; Gascón et al., 2021; Hull, 2024; Siew, 2024). However, systematic implementation and assessment remain limited (Guo, 2020; Gascón et al., 2021). Combined and sustained interventions (workload adjustments + support + autonomy + coping training + training) show more promise than isolated measures (Demerouti, 2024; Kim & Buzzelli, 2024).

Sectoral responses, including labour regulation, union support, and university curricula on resilience and digital safety, also emerge as critical (Erdem & Beykoz, 2025; Bustamante-Granda et al., 2021; Woldearegay, 2022). As reported in previous literature, peer networks, particularly for freelancers and small outlets, are increasingly recognised as valuable “resource caravans” (Hughes et al., 2021; Chew et al., 2024).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this review offer relevant implications. From an individual perspective, it highlights the

importance of journalists learning to recognise the early signs of emotional exhaustion, cynicism or depersonalisation, and adopting sustainable strategies that promote self-care. Digital disconnection, establishing boundaries between work and personal life, and seeking peer support are useful mechanisms, but insufficient if they are not accompanied by other, more structural transformations.

In response, it is imperative that each media organization confronts the necessity of reconceiving work environments that facilitate more robust and sustainable journalism. Evidence suggests that tangible measures - such as redistributing workloads, establishing empathetic leadership, offering psychological support resources and explicitly recognising the value of journalistic work- not only improve well-being, but also have a positive impact on the quality and credibility of the news product. Initiatives such as shortening the working week, implementing mentoring programmes and developing flexible break systems are promising experiments that merit systematic long-term evaluation.

From a sectoral viewpoint, the results advocate for the enhancement of collective endeavors via unions, professional organizations, and regulatory structures that ensure fundamental rights such as digital disconnection and safeguards against harassment. University training in journalism should also integrate emotional resilience, stress management and psychosocial safety skills in order to prepare new generations to cope with the demands of emotionally intense and technologically saturated work.

Overall, it is confirmed that journalistic burnout cannot be addressed by fragmented individual solutions. It is a systemic phenomenon which, as such, requires coordinated responses between professionals, organisations and the sector as a whole. In this regard, research conducted at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri is highly relevant, stating that, in the opinion of respondents, the most effective solutions to curb burnout are offering more employees the option of a four-day work week, regularly assessing the workload of journalists and teams, recognising and appreciating more the valuable work of employees, granting additional days off, and offering flexible benefits (Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute, 2024). In any instance, it is solely via a synergistic amalgamation of organizational restructuring, the enhancement of professional resilience, and the implementation of welfare-centric public policies that it will become feasible to disrupt the cycle of attrition delineated by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) frameworks, thereby reinstating the professional agency requisite for both sustainable and ethically robust journalism.

CONCLUSION

This analysis shows that burnout among journalists is not just a personal difficulty but a symptom of deeper structural problems within the industry. Although many coping strategies and interventions have been proposed, they often remain isolated efforts that are not fully woven into the everyday rhythms of newsroom work. The evidence indicates that burnout tends to surface when rising professional demands collide with limited organisational support, underscoring the relevance of frameworks such as Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR). The combined pressures of emotional labour, constant digital connectivity and precarious employment further accelerate the erosion of journalists' resources in multiple settings. While individual coping strategies can offer some relief, their impact is short-lived when organisations do not provide sustained support. Overall, the findings point to the need for coordinated, multi-level responses that address both the immediate psychosocial risks inside newsrooms and the broader systemic forces shaping contemporary journalism.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Among the limitations of the study, the results of this review should be interpreted with caution due to the methodological heterogeneity we noticed in the studies analysed. As we have seen, they differ in the instruments used, the cut-off points applied and the dimensions they prioritise, which makes it difficult to establish solid cross-sectional or longitudinal comparisons. This lack of methodological homogeneity partly reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the field, but also highlights the absence of a consensus on metrics for defining the clinical threshold of the syndrome in media environments.

In turn, the use of limited or non-representative samples does not allow for the formulation of strong causal relationships. The lack of longitudinal or experimental studies limits the understanding of the intrinsic mechanisms at work in burnout, and also prevents us from knowing the real effectiveness of the various strategies. Furthermore, the geographical and linguistic bias of the available literature leaves large parts of the global news

map unexplored. Regions such as the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America have little systematic data, despite the fact that some of the structural conditions (precariousness, violence, lack of labour protection) could intensify the vulnerability experienced by professionals.

These methodological and geographical limitations not only restrict the generalisability of the results, but also pose an ethical and epistemological challenge: understanding burnout in contemporary journalism requires a global and comparative perspective that captures both local specificities and the common dynamics of the digital ecosystem.

Future studies should prioritize the creation of a universal, standardized system for assessing journalistic burnout, which should include both validated psychometric tools (such as MBI, CBI, OLBI) and objective metrics like heart-rate variability, cortisol levels, or sleep-pattern analysis. By combining these diverse measures, reliance on self-reported information could be reduced, improving diagnostic precision, and enabling better cross-cultural comparisons. Moreover, the field requires longitudinal and experimental investigations that can uncover causal relationships. Multi-wave panels, real-time, ecologically grounded data collection methods (e.g., digital diaries) and field interventions in newsrooms could shed light on how hyperconnectivity, emotional labor, and organizational constraints collectively shape burnout paths. In addition, there is an urgent need to expand empirical research into underrepresented areas, such as the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America. Conducting comparative and context-sensitive studies in media landscapes that are structurally vulnerable would help address existing geographical biases and contribute to a more thorough global comprehension of this challenge.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Table 2: List of Studies Analysed in this Systematic Review, Available on Figshare at <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.30533153>

Appendix 2: MMAT Bias Analysis of the Studies Considered for this Systematic Review, Available on Figshare at <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.30483143>

Appendix 3: Table 3: Methodological Details of the Studies Analysed for this Systematic Review, Available on Figshare at <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.30483155>

Appendix 4: Protocol Used to Conduct this Systematic Review, Available at <https://osf.io/syqa2/>