



From Passion to Disillusionment: The Psychological Journey of Generation Z Journalists

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ABSTRACT

Background: Previous research has suggested burnout has afflicted journalists for decades. Nevertheless, studies for television journalists, who operate in a highly stressful visual medium, are understudied. Likewise, less experienced, younger Generation Z employees are also studied less, even though they will likely experience burnout quicker. This research aimed to be one of the very first to study the convergence of these two fields by exploring how Generation Z television journalists understand and experience burnout, detailing the associated job demands and resources, and proposing actions that news managers and educators can take, using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory. The researcher semi-structured interviews with 25 (18-27 of age) Generation Z journalists in U.S. local television news. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. **Key Findings:** Most respondents (23 out of 25) reported burnout as encapsulated by exhaustion, cynicism, and detachment from passions. Most salient job demands were “doing more with less” (e.g. high volume of work for low pay, inadequate staffing), poor management, and inability to isolate oneself. Most salient job resources that lessened the feelings of burnout were macro- level impact of the job, community support, and job autonomy. The attendees gave some practical suggestions for managers in the newsroom (like being open, putting mental health first) as well as educators in journalism (like being open about the industry’s realities, as well as teaching self-advocacy). In conclusion, the results suggest that the television journalists of Generation Z suffer from systemic problems in the journalism industry burnout crisis, and the problems faced by that generation of journalists compounded. The results of this study suggest that there is an imminent need for systemic, specific interventions from both newsroom managers and educators in journalism in order to assist this vulnerable generation and to ensure their retention in the industry and their talent is sustained. The industry’s future depends on this generation.

Keywords: Job Demands-Resources Theory, Mental Health, television journalists, burnout, Generation Z

INTRODUCTION

As of 2019, journalists have one of the most stressful jobs in the world (CareerCaste, 2019). Due to conglomerate structures and the demands of the profession, journalists have suffered from job burnout (Chronic Job Stress, Emotional Exhaustion, Cynical Attitude, and/Efforts Required), (Maslach & Leiter 2016). Recent estimates identify a 70% workload burnout crisis in local journalists across the U.S. (Thompson & Chedraoui 2023). The disparity between the underlying and evident crisis of burnout and the turnover called is alarming. With a decrease in advertising revenue in the market and layoffs (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2022), the turnover and burnout combined with contraction in the industry cause a worrying perception of the field and of the workers.

There is an expanding body of research that examines journalist burnout, though some areas remain understudied. First, although television continues to be an important and trusted source of local news for many Americans (Pew Research Center, 2023b), TV news has received far less academic attention than newspaper news (MacDonald et al., 2016). Television journalists encounter distinct stressors, specific to their medium, such as the pressures associated with live reporting, incorporating attention-grabbing visuals on deadlines, repeated exposure to traumas through violent footage, and the demands of keeping up a public and active social media persona. Even so, these characteristics are rarely the point of focus for studies on burnout.

First, there simply is little to no research on the youngest cohort of journalists, Gen Z (1997-2012). This is a significant gap. Research over the decades has shown time and time again that journalists that are younger and have fewer years on the job have the highest propensity to burn out and have intent to leave the field (Cook & Banks, 1993; Filak & Reinardy, 2011; Thompson & Chedraoui, 2023). With Gen Z expected to become nearly 30% of the US workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023), it is imperative we understand the workplace experiences and the workplace essential, and the particular workplace vulnerabilities for the future the field of journalism.

This investigation seeks to address both gaps through the first attempt at a qualitative examination of burnout in Generation Z television journalists. This investigation has significance in three areas: This study affords managers and leaders of television newsrooms with primary, evidence-based, first-person accounts of the factors that contribute to and mitigate burnout in the television newsrooms' youngest employees. This understanding, in turn, provides managers and leaders with the capacity to design tailored burnout mitigation systems along with retention strategies.

This study provides evidence to provide journalism and mass communication educators graduate students' recommendations on how to help students prepare for the psychological, emotional, and occupational barriers to practice in the contemporary newsroom which would lead to improved occupational sustainability

and wellbeing. This study contributes to the literature on burnout among journalists, specifically television journalists, and, across the newest generations, Gen Z. This study is also guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory and adds to the literature empirically and conceptually.

The goal of this research is to elicit a deep qualitative comprehension of the lived experiences of Generation Z television journalists and the phenomenon of burnout. The goal can be developed as follows in the form of research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What is the definition of burnout according to Generation Z journalists in television?

RQ2: What is the burnout phenomenon like in the lived experiences of Generation Z journalists on television?

RQ3: What do Generation Z journalists in television perceive as being `the job demands and job resources in their experience of burnout?

RQ4: What is the advice of Generation Z television journalists for newsroom management concerning burnout and workplace stress?

RQ5: What do Generation Z television journalists propose to educators in journalism and mass communication to prepare students for workplace stress and burnout?

The study adopted a qualitative approach 25 Generation Z journalists were being interviewed from local TV stations in different market areas in. Snowball and social media sampling were used for interview recruitment. The interviews were then fully transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke thematic analysis from 2006 which helps in recognizing and recording thematic patterns in the data as related to the research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations of Burnout

The understanding of the phenomenon of burnout is much more developed now than when the phenomenon of burnout was first described in a systematic way. Burnout was first conceptualized by psychologist Herbert Freudenberger in 1974, who described being burnt out as, to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources." Freudenberger documented the phenomenon over the course of a year while working at a free clinic in New York City. He identified symptoms of burnout by making physical manifestations of burnout. He documented symptoms of exhaustion, and fatigue, as well as more chronic symptoms of colds and headaches. He also documented a range of manifestations in the behavior of individuals, including anger, cynicism, and depressive symptoms. He particularly noted that the individuals who burned out the quickest were the dedicated and committed people."

Following Freudenberger's contributions, social psychologist Christina Maslach was the first to empirically study burnout, wherein Freudenberger's work was mostly autobiographical and qualitative, Maslach interacted with the data in the quantitative domain, producing distinct tools for measurement (Heinemann &

Heinemann, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017b). The Maslach Burnout Inventory she created constituted a paradigm shift in the field of burnout from primarily qualitative to systematic empirical study (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001). The MBI identifies burnout in three constructs as a result of qualitative work done: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Exhaustion, the most Burnout indicator, is the overall feeling of being overextended or depleted from work and the emotional and physical demands that it requires (Maslach et al., 2001; Mind Garden, 2023). A distant or indifferent attitude towards one's work, or cynicism (depersonalization), is one of the most common correlations of exhaustion (Maslach et al., 2001). Inefficacy (or decreased accomplishment) is the feeling of lacking effectiveness or loss of achievement in one's work (Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach and Leiter (2016) state that exhaustion and cynicism are a result of work overload; inefficacy, on the other hand, is from a lack of adequate resources and/or recognition.

Modified versions of the MBI have branched out into human services, education, and general occupations, with MBI primarily being used in human services, due to its initial design (Mind Garden, 2023). Over 3 decades later, it has withstood the test of time and is still the most commercially used burnout assessment tool in the world (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). MBI, with its 3 components of burnout, made it possible to assess the type of burnout Maslach worked to make well-known, and is why the World Health Organization was able to opine and argue for the inclusion of burnout in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an occupational phenomenon (World Health Organization, 2019). This was due to the 3 components of the MBI that measured burnout, and its inclusion as an occupational phenomenon. It is still a point of contention in the medical field.

Burnout is not classified as a mental disorder in the DSM-5 issued by the American Psychiatric Association (Borysenko, 2019; Nadon et al., 2022). Heinemann and Heinemann (2017) argue that there is a considerable gap between the science of burnout and the public understanding of it, as it tends to be more researched than emphasized in the public. This calls for more research into the phenomenon of burnout. From a systematic review, Salvagioni et al (2017) were able to conclude that burnout is more than a psychological phenomenon due to the extensive amount of research documenting the physical effects (more cardiovascular risk, fatigue, and gastrointestinal issues), psychological effects (more insomnia, depressive symptoms, and anxiety), and occupational effects (more job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover) burnout has.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory of Burnout

Scholars studying burnout in different professions have started focusing on the JD-R theory as a burnout framework. Although the MBI originated in the context of human services, the JD-R model suggests that burnout, and in particular, burnout dimensions of exhaustion and cynicism, are elements of almost all

professions, thus offering a more generalizable framework for burnout research (Nadon et al., 2022).

The JD-R model is based on the work of Demerouti et al. (2001), who argued that any characteristic of a job can fit into one of two major categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands are defined as “the physical, social, or organizational elements of the job that require a sustained physical or mental effort” and are linked to negative outcomes such as exhaustion and psychological costs (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Examples are heavy workload, conflict with coworkers, and complexity of tasks at work (Bakker et al., 2023). Job resources, on the other hand, are the “physical, psychological, social, or organizational features of the job” that may enable and encourage employees to attain work objectives, lessen job demands, and stimulate growth and development on a personal level (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Examples of job resources include the constructive provision of feedback and job autonomy as well as training (Bakker et al., 2023).

Burnout stems from two psychological processes as suggested by the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014). The first is the health impairment process, which argues that as a result of chronic job demands, employees' mental and physical resources become exhausted, which may lead to health problems. The second is the motivational process, which argues that employees become disengaged and cynical with a drop in their motivation as a result of inadequate resources that do not satisfy the employees' workplace psychological needs. Additionally, the theory proposes interactive effects between demands and resources, as having high job resources can protect employees from the high job demand and strain impacts, while having high job demands may lead to high job resources impacting motivation significantly (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Later versions of the JD-R model have included personal resources as a positive self-belief pertaining to individual resilience and the perceived ability to control and influence one's surroundings (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014; Bakker and de Vries, 2021; Hobfoll et al., 2003). Specifically, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience are energizing resources that motivate one and, therefore, help in goal attainment. Bakker and de Vries (2021) point out the fact that the presence of personal resources and positive beliefs correlate negatively with workplace stress and burnout: “they are less likely to experience job stress and burnout” (Bakker and de Vries 2021, p. 2). It is this absence of systematic evidence that has led to questions surrounding the model's depiction of personal resources. (Schaufeli 2017a; Schaufeli and Taris 2014).

Burnout in Journalism: A Historical Perspective

It is nothing new for members of the journalistic community to experience burnouts. Prof. Emeritus Fred Endres (1988) was the first to explore the area of burnout among reporters, conducting research with reporters from newspapers in Ohio and discovering that of the respondents, 36% stated they had burnout at the time of the research or had burned out in the past. Endres (1988) indicates that burnout from the current or past memories of the participant had an impact on the

participant's relationships with others and stifled the participant's overall ability to live to the fullest. Even though Endres is the foundation of the burnout impact on reporters and the first to research it, it is correct that he has received criticism for his methodology (MacDonald et al., 2016).

Cook and Banks (1993) expanded on previous research with the MBI and surveyed newspapers and constructed a specific burnout profile of "young, entry level journalists, working as a multiple assignment copy editors at small, underpaid, and over jobbed newspapers, who want to leave the field and are disillusioned with journalism and lack satisfaction with their work" (116). This profile remained virtually the same over the decades, as Macdonald et al. (2016) reviewed the quantitative research for 1988 to 2013 and found the most at-risk journalist to be "young females, with less experience in journalism, working in newspapers with small circulation size" (p. 42).

The association between burnout and the attrition of employees in United States newsrooms has already been described in several studies in the United States and abroad (Cook & Banks, 1993; Ivask, 2017; Jung & Kim, 2012; Liu & Lo, 2018; Reinardy, 2008, 2011). This relationship generates extra concerns in view of the number of burnt-out journalists (Thompson & Chedraoui, 2023) and the declining number of jobs available for journalists (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). As one news director expressed in the 2023 TV and Radio Staffing Report, "We are stretched too thin and that gets worse every year ... This business is broken, and if something is not done soon, at the top, television news is going to ..." will go the same way newspapers have" (Papper & Henderson, 2023, p. 6).

The Unique Stressors of Television Journalism

Burnout impacts journalists across all forms of media, but there are also unique forms of stress within television journalism that require attention and analysis. News broadcasts are produced and aired in real-time, creating unique strains that do not exist within print journalism. Television journalists must incorporate visual and audio components into the material, and they must do so within a far shorter time frame. This is a "particularly difficult task" explained by Redmond et al. (2005) Television journalism now has an ever-expanding number of television stations and provided news broadcasts, meaning there is an ever-expanding number of television journalists filling the same number of slots (Pew, 2023a).

The pressures associated with live television have their own peculiarities and challenges. The television industry is known for hiring journalists who are able to articulate and write stories under pressure, without making mistakes, and without having to do multiple tasks. Stories should be made and written with the utmost precision and should be done before any competitors (and without the chance of making a mistake that will end up in a public blooper). (Pearson & Seglins, 2022). Most severe, in the context of television, is the need to be especially careful not to show audiences any shocking or explicit images that they may find distressful or that may haunt them for a long time. (MacDonald et al., 2020). Editors are also television

journalists, so in that context, in addition to having to be near shocking scenes to film and edit, they will have to relive the trauma multiple times while they are doing the editing.

Journalists who work in television bear greater risks of trauma and harassment. Television journalists are more vulnerable to harassment than their colleagues in radio, print, and online media (Gottfried et al, 2022). Those younger women television journalists are more visible in covering news; consequently, they receive significant amounts of online harassment (Lewis et al, 2020). These stressors suggest poor television journalists' well-being. A smaller percentage of television journalists (34%) than their online (54%) and print (52%) colleagues reported having jobs that positively contributed to their emotional well-being. Less television journalists expressed satisfaction in their jobs than journalists of other media (Gottfried et al, 2022).

Generation Z: The Newest Journalistic Cohort

According to the Pew Research Center, the newest cohort of the workforce is Generation Z, those born between the years 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). They are classified as emerging adults (Arnett, 2000, 2015), and are in the developmental stage of identity formation, transition, focus on the self, potential, and the optimistic. This life stage, with its characteristics, can intersect significantly with the formation of professional identities, career stress, and burnout, especially given the current conditions of the industry.

Of all the workforce cohorts, Generation Z's unique characteristics as employees of the journalism industry represent the most significant generational disparity in the workplace. This workforce cohort, the most educated in the history of the U.S. (Parker & Igielnik, 2020), also, for the first time, openly and critically discusses work expectations and the values and interests' alignment of the employers with the employees. (Anders, 2022). They also advocate for flexible work options, (Aggarwal et al., 2020; Vitug, 2022). Generation Z values job satisfaction through feedback on work and intrinsic motivation (Mahmoud et al., 2021; Aggarwal et al., 2020).

Specifically, Generation Z showcases unique traits across the domains of mental health and the mechanisms used for coping with stress. They exhibit more willingness to talk about mental health compared with the older cohorts; however, they report their stress levels to be higher and their mental wellbeing to be worse (APA, 2018, 2020). The American Psychological Association (2018) reports that members of Generation Z are more likely to declare their mental health status to be fair or poor compared to millennials, Gen X, boomers and older generations. Generation Z adults experienced the most stress of any age group in 2020, reporting an average of 6.1 out of 10 (APA, 2020). This pattern of stress distribution poses unique challenges for Generation Z journalists, who must navigate the covering of highly stressful and traumatic news while managing their own elevated stress levels.

JD-R Theory in Journalism Research

The JD-R theory has shown usefulness but not enough has been done with it

in research regarding burnout in journalism. For instance, Chan et al. (2015) used the JD-R model in studying communication professionals in Hong Kong, which included journalists. The participants reported having difficult clients, unreasonable workloads, deadline pressures, and perfectionism as major job demands. The participants reported having variety, autonomy, and social support as primary job resources. Interestingly, information communication technology was seen as both a demand and resource as it helped with communication but also prolonged working hours beyond normal schedule.

Ivask (2017) also applied the JD-R model to Estonian journalists and found turnover intents to be of concern and that there were top job demands surrounding exhaustion of the workload, engagement with aggressive sources, and/or having to re-read published work, while there also were important job resources which were good workplace of the relationships of colleagues and supervisors and/or good salary rewards. Liu and Lo (2018) also used JD-R theory with Taiwanese reporters, found that with a heavier workload and the lower autonomy regarding news, there was a predictive factor of higher burnout, which indicated that there was a greater interpersonal job satisfaction of the workplace that influenced the turnover intent.

Muala (2017) examined facets of the JD-R model in relation to the emotional demands and stress in jobs of Jordanian journalists and found that emotional demands, task significance, and job insecurity predicted job stress. This was adjacent to the burnout studies. All JD-R studies in this field were international, signifying a gap of Western-focused research in this stream.

Gaps in Literature and Justification for the Present Study

In covering journalist burnout, this review also notes important shortcomings in the current literature. First, television journalists face high burnout and report specific medium-related stressors (Papper & Henderson, 2024) but still receive less attention in the literature than their print counterparts (MacDonald et al., 2016). Second, younger and less experienced journalists are consistently identified as being at greater burnout risk (Cook & Banks, 1993; Thompson & Chedraoui, 2023), yet there is no research on exclusively treating journalists from Generation Z as a proper cohort with particular definable workplace characteristics and expectations.

Third, JD-R theory is likely to be one of the potential candidates for the explanation of burnout in journalism; however, the theory has predominantly been applied to non-Western settings. Last, existent research has primarily been focused on estimating the prevalence of burnout as opposed to addressing the qualitative dimensions and possible solutions from the journalists' standpoints. As applied studies on stress and burnout interventions for journalists there is indeed a void, as Monteiro et al. (2015) aptly pointed out.

The current research tries to investigate one of the few remaining gaps in the JD-R model to understand how the youngest television journalists in the US experience burnout. 2023 Crowley illustrates the issue of loss and retention starkly: news businesses worldwide accrue considerable expense chasing young and varied talent, only to ignore retention.... While the study encourages Crowley to address

the negligence issue, it remains the first JD-R model research focusing on the lived experience of the most at risk, the youngest television journalists.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative research design was utilized in this study to understand deeply the experience of burnout among television journalists of Generation Z. With qualitative research, the objective was to understand the meaning of their lived experience unlike the research with the quantitative data which looks for statistically viable answers, especially with complex and sensitive issues (Creswell, 2013). Given the sensitivity and the social stigma attached to discussing issues of mental health, and especially within the highly competitive area of journalism, qualitative approach was the only methodology to allow the participants to share their lived experience with the depth, emotion and nuance these issues require.

While Lindlof and Taylor (2019) noted that semi-structured interviews are the best means of achieving a fair equilibrium between rigid conformity to an interview guide, and the freedom for a more general conversation, it was for these reasons that we also chose that method. Having a predetermined interview guide ensures reliability across interviews, and participants are comfortable and allowed to narrate their story in the manner they choose, while the researcher is able to manage the discussion to explore emerging ideas more deeply. The semi-structured interview was best suited to the aim of this study, and its exploratory nature in particular, to provide each journalist the freedom to provide their account while still addressing all the research questions.

Sampling Strategy and Participant Recruitment

The research questions drove purposive sampling to select relevant cases; the sample focused on journalists who, in 2024, would fall within the Pew Research Center's definition of Generation Z people aged 18 to 27 and who were employed in the U.S., at local ABC, CBS, FOX, or NBC television stations, in journalistic positions, as, for example, reporters, producers, photojournalists, anchors, assignment editors, etc. The sample did not include student journalists, as the purpose was to investigate professional workplace experiences.

Given the challenges to recruitment of participants within defined age ranges and specific employment, snowball sampling was used as the chief recruitment strategy. As defined by Biernacki and Waldorf (1981, p. 141), snowball sampling "yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest." Rather than being a liability, snowball sampling's reputation for accessing hard to reach populations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019) made the technique a perfect fit for research aimed at a specific generational cohort in a profession.

The recruitment that the researcher carried out considering that he was a former journalist and had experience in various fields was then expressed through different means. He started in his close network and then social media outlets that

were relevant to journalist and generation Z (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X). In the later parts of the research, the researcher shared the study information on his public profile, various criminal justice Facebook groups, and other public social media. Some of the first participants then disseminated the study information to their peers, resulting in a snowball effect.

The researcher continued the recruitments until data saturation was obtained, which was determined when further interviews stopped providing new information or significant new themes. (Kriuger et al. 2001) and (Lindlof & Taylor) 2019. After 25 Interviews, enough were obtained to reach what was considered the saturation point. The interviews had enough variation and were indented enough to reach the point of in-depth qualitative analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was gathered using a combination of in-person and online interviews conducted between March 4 to March 21, 2024. Nonverbal communication is a hallmark of qualitative research, and face-to-face interviews are considered a gold standard, however, with participants residing outside of the interviewer's proximity, this was not feasible (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). Zoom videoconferencing was therefore used for most of the interviews (24 of 25); Zoom is a commonly used and reliable platform for qualitative research, allowing researchers to maintain rapport with participants and to observe nonverbal communication including facial expressions, posture and gestures (Archibald et al., 2019; Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

Given the sensitive nature of discussing mental health and workplace stress, interview participants underwent a complete informed consent process prior to the interviews. Participants were reminded of their confidentiality and, in line with best practices, their right to withdraw from the study without any repercussions. A semi-structured approach to the interviews took place using an interview guide, which the university where the researcher is based, approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB), prior to the start of data collection.

The first stage of the study involved an interview guide which was an expansion of the guide used in an unpublished pilot study conducted by the researcher on an overlapping topic (Siew, 2023). This involved an elaborated set of questions which were categorized as per the research questions of the study which included: (1) the demographic profile of the participants and their career trajectory in television journalism; (2) what is/are their perceptions and definitions of stress and burnout; (3) what are their own experiences with burnout and the symptoms and the effects; (4) what are the elements that you perceive to be the job resources and demands that you think contribute to/buffer burnout; and (5) what are your suggestions for the managers of the newsroom and for educators in journalism on the burnout problem.

Some of the questions that were included in the guide were what their own experiences with burnout and the symptoms and the effects are and what are job resources that you think contribute to/buffer burnout. Some of the questions were

formed on the basis of the adaptability and fluidity of the guide narratives and the researcher included some spontaneous questions to bring the dialogue to an emerging subplot. This was an effort to strike the balance of customization and flexibility in addressing individual narratives while ensuring that all topics of the research are covered (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). The interviews were designed in such a way that participants spend an average of 63 minutes as the longest was 1 hour and 35 minutes and the shortest was 31 minutes. This was done in a way that the participant's time was valuable and efficient, but ample data was still acquired for analysis.

Each interview was audio and video recorded with participant consent in order to facilitate precise transcription and document key nonverbal communication. The researcher also wrote some short notes in order to capture their thoughts and emphasize certain quotes to return to those quotes in more detail.

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis phase was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis process, which offers both rigor and adaptability in managing and discussing recurring themes in qualitative data. This type of analysis was chosen for its accessibility and theoretical flexibility, which is important in working to understand the experiences presented by the participants in all their detail and complexity.

The analysis process began with data familiarization, where the researcher listened to recorded interviews and read their transcripts multiple times to take note of primary reflections. Initial transcripts were produced using Microsoft Word and Zoom's transcription services, then the researcher fine-tuned them to ensure they were full and correct and included account of pauses, emphatic utterances, and other important non-verbal communication.

To safeguard the participants' confidentiality, all personally identifiable data was removed at the time of transcription. To each participant, the researcher assigned a random identification code (P1-P25) and described their television market size in broad ranges of (1-50, 50-100, 100+) in order to maintain the tiered market classification system developed in prior research (Guo & Sun, 2022; Prakash & Wenger, 2020). This classification system allowed the participants to understand the nature of their work environment without revealing their identity through more precise market data.

Part of the second phase of the research involves the creation of the initial code based on the extensive dataset. Features of the dataset that the researcher determined to be interesting or of particular importance were highlighted. A coding framework was performed based on the research questions, and respondents were assigned based on which question their answer corresponded to. These initial codes were then transferred to individual Word documents for each research question, and for some responses that were determined to be complex, multiple codes were applied.

In searching for themes and arranging codes into potential themes and sub-themes, the third phase was built on. The researcher organized the coded data

extracts and grouped them into cohesive structures that highlighted the patterns of the respondents' experiences through the diverse documentation. The creation of thematic maps to outline the connections between the codes and their respective preliminary definitions aided the researcher in providing specific definitions for the themes.

The representation of participants' experiences and the formation of a pattern that was cohesive was brought about through a recursive process of reviewing and polishing of the themes known as phase four. Candidate themes were compared to the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure that they were authentic and reliable. This phase resulted in some themes that were previously isolated merging or splitting. The data was then used to finalize other themes through isolation.

During the fifth stage, the researcher further enhanced and sharpened the existing themes to create more focused explanations and assigned distinct names to each one. The researcher aimed to create unique explanations of the data for each distinct theme while preserving alignment to the research questions and theoretical framework.

The last stage was completing the insights report, which linked the analysis text to illustrative pieces and contrasted quotations. To balance the need for confidentiality with the need to contextualize the quotes, individual participants were identified using their ID code, position (job title), market size range, and pronouns, e.g. P7, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her.

Enhancing Research Rigor and Trustworthiness

Multiple approaches were used to increase the credibility and integrity of the study. As per Creswell (2013) and Lindlof and Taylor (2019), Member checking was performed to increase the study's validity. Following the suggestions made by McKim (2023) on how to do effective member checking, in July 2024, four months after the interviews were conducted, the researcher sent the study's conclusions and findings to the participants. Participants were fielded some closed-ended questions about the extent to which the findings reflected their experiences, additions and deletions to the findings that participants were thinking, and any other comments the participants might have on the analysis. Of the 25 participants, 23 responded, and all of them stated that the findings were congruent with their experiences. A few participants made minor suggestions regarding some of the findings in order to have them more anonymized.

Through researcher reflexivity, there was ongoing self-engagement with the positionality of the researcher which in this context, was a Generation Z television journalist. This background was a double-edged sword, as it did offer the researcher privileged insight into the industry and assisted in rapport building, but the researcher was also aware of the possible impact of her experiences on the results. In order to set up a system where the researcher's perspective was sidelined, regular reflection memos were set up to account preconceptions. The two years temporal distance from working in an actual professional newsroom also allowed us to have some analysis from distance too, while keeping enough knowledge of the industry to

have contextual details and understand the terms used in the industry.

Ethical Considerations

Before exceptional and ethical behavioral standards were implemented participants were able to interview students in the workforce with challenges relating to their mental struggles. Informed consents were obtained from participants and were made aware that their participation was voluntary and has the ability to withdraw from the study without incidence.

To what extent the outcomes and the results and the students were considered, and the students were considered in the results was the guardian to the potential of the results. To what extent the outcomes and the results would be the results would provide the outcomes, and the potential of the results and the results of the results of the potential would be applied.

Limitations

Some limitations must be considered. Also, the snowball sampling method, while helpful for studying this group, might have restricted this sample's diversity, especially if it disproportionately includes journalists from specific networks or who possess certain traits. Moreover, although the in-depth qualitative approach allows for rich contextual details, it means that one cannot expect this to be generalized to the population of television journalists of Generation Z.

The researcher's personal history as a journalist also had pros and cons. On the one hand, it enabled building rapport and gaining a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of the industry. On the other, it called for greater reflexivity to avoid letting assumptions and biases pattern the collection and analysis of the data. On the other hand, the researcher's limited experience in the industry (only one year in television news) and time away from the newsroom (two years) created some equilibrium and made the researcher feel like, in a positive way, an 'outsider looking in' which enhanced the interest and lessened the bias people usually bring to such a topic.

Last, the descriptive and cross-sectional design of the data means the analysis illustrates certain experiences at a precise time and does not capture the way burnout in journalists may experience change at different stages of their careers. Regardless of the above challenges, this study stands as an important starting point for understanding an unexplored population and an unexamined phenomenon.

RESULTS / FINDINGS

Presentation of Findings

How Generation Z Defines Burnout (RQ1)

While the burnout phenomenon has definitional overlap with conceptual frameworks, participants appeared to articulate the definitions on a personal, lived-experience, generational, and environmental workplace context. The loss of passion appeared in most of 'themes' as participants volunteered definitions of burnout.

- Loss of Motivation, Interest, and Passion (14 participants): The definition that came most to the forefront talked about losing meaning and any appeal to doing

it. A participant described it as burnout being the point of work where utmost the sparkle' (P22, Sports Producer, Market 100+, he/him). As these journalists described it, burnout was a loss of significant passion that their work in journalism used to encompass but later devolved to 'a complete and utter disdain for something you have to spend a lot of time doing' (P24, MMJ, Market 50-100, she/her). The loss of passion created a painful inner turmoil. As one journalist explained it, 'When you remove yourself from your job at the end of the day, you're like, 'Oh, no, don't get me wrong. I love what I do; I just can't. I just physically can't bring myself to want to do it anymore' (P7, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her).

However, on the other hand, whereas other respondents understood burnout to encompass the psychological and emotional components, the following six participants identified profound tiredness as the major feature. They described fatigue as deep and encompassing. Some participants described exhaustion as both emotional and physical, while others described emotional fatigue on a level. One of the breaking news reporters described the experience of this type of depletion from work as "...you put deep emotional and physical energy into trying to stay mentally afloat, not to mention the job" (P2, Breaking News Reporter, Market 1-50, she/her).

(SOME QUOTE). When burnout invades totality of life and workloads become so disproportionately unbalanced, the situation is described as boundaryless burnout. Work and life become so disproportionately unbalanced. One news producer reacted to the situation, detailing, 'Not being able to separate your work from your productivity and. When you tie so much of yourself to the job, you kind of lose that bit of yourself, (P10, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/her). The overwhelming anxiety and pressure from work is described as 'the Sunday scaries but every workday' (P16, MMJ, Market 1-50, he/him).

Over it *5* participants) With this definition came a sense of complete disengagement. Thoughts and feelings became a sort of shut down. One photojournalist captured this feeling best with the saying, *you can only give so much before you're like done giving* (P17, Photographer, Market 1-50, he/him). Here, the complete emotional disengagement with work was evident. *Feelings of Ineffectiveness or Unsatisfaction* (4 participants, in this lens, define burnout was framed with a sense of professional inefficacy and, an overwhelming sense, fatigue, and lack of appreciation. A news producer equated her experience in the industry to a *bald tire or dull knife* (P15, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/her.) An assignment editor expressed the cognitive, emotional and physical frustration of this dynamic as her feeling like *...I'm doing like so much work like my wheels are spinning like so fast, but I'm not getting like... any traction. I feel like my work's not very appreciated* (P19, Assignment Editor, 50-100, she/her).

There were some other, less common definitions as well, such as associations with negativity and negative emotions (3 participants), comparisons with depression (3 participants), feeling stuck (2 participants), and being overstressed (2 participants). One participant defined burnout in a unique way, as experiencing deep and radical shifts in perception of self: "almost to the point where you're

looking at yourself in the mirror, and you're almost unrecognizable to yourself (P24, MMJ, Market 50-100, she/her).\"

Generation Z's Burnout Experience (RQ2)

According to the data collected, 23 of the 25 study participants reported experiencing burnout in their professions, often identifying patterns related to burnout, like, "I think [burnout] comes with the territory, sadly, at this point" (P23, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her). The remaining two participants reported a much lower level of field experience and perceived burnout as something likely to occur in their future careers, and not something that happens often at this time.

Impact on Work

- **Minimum Work Output (19 respondents):** The most typical manifestation of burnout in the workplace involved journalists doing only the absolute bare minimum of their responsibilities. Being too burned out and demotivated to innovate or go more than the absolute necessary responsibilities or work, people went with a "let-me-just-mark-this-as-done" (P21, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her) or "I only have to finish this to go home" (P20, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/her) mentality. On scenario where this was included was a senior political correspondent explaining this to us. "There's no irresponsibility in the sense of, you know, incorrect information, or anything like that, but... Is there a, sort of, personal engagement in the sense of, do I really feel like spending the extra five minutes to, you know, spend five minutes and try to figure out a different video to use for this certain part of, I don't know, where I could just grab some earlier video that I have?" (P6, Senior Political Correspondent, Market 50-100, he/him). "What's the point in trying?" (P9, Photojournalist, Market 1-50, She/her). Many of them assigned the reason to Melissa's lack of engagement to a loss of feeling valued.

- **Negativity and Cynicism (17 participants):** Burnout showed itself through negative feelings and cynical work attitudes. Participants reflected on how they became 'the classic jaded journalists (P18, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/her) and many recounted how they were snapping at coworkers, crying on a daily basis, and displaying a constant 'I hate my job' disposition. One anchor/reporter described extreme changes in her behavior during burnout as follows: "I would snap at my co-workers. People just wouldn't come up and talk to me because they were afraid that I was gonna say something that was just rude to them, because I was tired" (P14, Anchor/Reporter, Market 50-100, she/her). Some journalists became even quieter and socially withdrawn. A news producer described how she "just kinda wanna go in, put on my headphones and be left alone" (P10, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/her).

- **Dread, Tardiness, and Absenteeism (8 participants):** Participants verbalized that complete workplace burnout was coupled with the mental and physical avoidance of the workplace. This was reported as showing up late, over-utilized paid time off, and as one of the respondents put it, "everything I can do to be out of my newsroom" (P6, Senior Political Correspondent, Market 50-100, he/him). It also included mental

avoidance and workplace dread where one journalist stated that he visioned 0"missing my exit to go to work and I wound not wake up so that I did not have to work that day0" (P12, News Producer/MMJ, Market 50-100, she/her).

Impact Outside of Work

- **Too Tired to Do Anything (16 participants):** Perhaps the most significant impact, which was equally common to all participants, was extreme fatigue which seemed to rob the journalists of the energy to participate in life outside of work.. From participants' perspectives, inactivity, excessive sleeping, and bingeing tv shows dominated their `weekend` time off work. There was a dramatic toll on social life, which one news producer recounted as "sleeping all weekend or not waking up until I have to go back to work... I did not have a life outside of work at that point, because I was too tired to have one" (P23, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her). Routine activities of self-care including cooking, doing some exercise, and cleaning neglected the sustenance of everyday life.
- **Negativity and Cynicism Spillover (9 participants):** The work-related negativity journalists experienced, and the resultant cynical attitude, manifested in poor personal relationship also. As one MMJ described: `I became a very negative presence around family` (P24, MMJ, Market 50-100, she/her). Several participants described the negative impact of work on their relationships, one journalist even explained she was a couple of sessions in therapy, as she work-related anger was overly directed at her partner (P18, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/her).
- **Health Effects (9 participants):** Burnout resulted in long-lasting issues related to both physical and mental health. Participants described the following health issues: weight changes, nervous tics, and disrupted menstrual cycles. Participants described mental issues related to burnout and social isolation, excessive sleep, and social isolation, and even described it as a `darkness` period, as depression usually often was a part of these events, as was the case with many participants in the study who were also reporting other mental issues of a similar nature downward to the burnout mental level such as even more intense depressive and anxiety issues, and so as with many participants in the studyParticipants described competing factors for employment such as burnout related to mental issues as well as the feeling of the employment being more of a job than work. Burnout issues in employment caused many participants to express testimony that they loved journalism on unsustainable levels. The following testimony exemplifies this described tension. `I love news, and I would love to stay in news. I just don't know how sustainable that really is,` (P10, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/her).

What Hurts and Helps: Job Demands and Resources (RQ3)

Driven by JD-R theory, the participants pinpointed several different aspects of their burnout experiences, of which job demands were more frequently and more intensely mentioned over other resources.

Job Demands (What Hurts)

- **Doing More with Less (25 participants):** This pervasive theme encompassed multiple sub-themes:
 - **Low Pay (16 participants):** Participants consistently mentioned poor pay as a significant source of stress as it created financial difficulties and a sense of being undervalued. Participants described their pay as ‘inadequate,’ ‘unfair,’ and ‘insufficient.’ Many of these participants had difficulty covering the most basic of expenses. One anchor described the financial challenge of covering a tornado while ‘I had 89 cents in my bank account’ and the victims of the tornado were receiving free pizza, which he was unable to afford (P4, Anchor, Market 50-100, he/him).
- **Insufficient Staffing (13 participants):** Understaffed newsrooms forced journalists to take on multiple roles, work excessive amounts of overtime, and face one-person-band and unsafe conditions. One photojournalist described being forced to work mandatory overtime on her days off through coercion and guilt-tripping (P11, Photojournalist, Market 1-50, he/him).
- **Not Enough Time (8 participants):** Unrealistic deadlines contributed to constant pressure with participants portraying being expected to produce multiple high-end stories within a super unreasonably short time.
- **Issues with Management (18 participants):** Management challenges began to appear within the given category of demand:
- **No Support and No Care (14 participants):** Respondents described managers who either provided no training at all, ignored individual's concerns, and/or offered no emotional support or care even when someone became distressed or overly emotional at work. This sentiment was summarized by one MMJ, who expressed that, “At the end of the day, what they care most about is getting the story. They don’t care about me” (P24, MMJ, Market 50-100, she/her).
- **Gap Between Employees and Management (10 participants):** Journalists outlined some of the basic gaps in understanding and communication that exist between them and the managers, especially when managers were from entirely different roles or were from entirely different generations. This would often lead to a mismatch or an imbalance in expectations and workflow.
- **No Positive Feedback (6 participants):** Respondents expressed that they received feedback that was predominantly critical, and that this feedback was given while they were unrecognized during their achievements and successes, making it “hard to remember that you are doing good” (P13, News Producer, Market 1-50, she/they).
- **No Time Away from Work (15 participants):** Given the 24-hour news cycle and the expectations of management, disconnection from work was described as nearly impossible. Respondents described a lack of autonomy over their time, emphasizing that there was an expectation to be “on” and available at all times, and one news producer even received an email about how all their employees were to be available by phone all the time, unless they were on formal PTO (P7, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her).

- **Traumatic and Tough Topics (14 participants):** Exposed to suffering, death, and tragedy on a constant basis represented a serious emotional drain. Journalists spoke of themselves as being "filters" of graphic materials and one remarked that "we're all dealing with everybody's worst trauma cause that's what working at a news station is" (P23, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her).
- **Job Resources (What Helps):**
- **Community Impact (12 participants):** The most significant motivational resource was participants' ability to create an impact and enact and witness change in their communities. One executive producer highlighted this impact as reaffirming their reason for assimilation and their journalistic cause: "This is why I'm here. This is why I'm doing what I'm doing" (P25, Executive Producer, Market 100+, she/her).
- **Support from Co-Workers (11 participants):** Emotional and practical supports were derived from bonds characterized as "trauma bonds" and friendships. A photojournalist expressed this workplace relationship as, "we're all in the s--- together. We all understand what's going on" (P3, Photojournalist, Market 1-50, he/him).
- **Job Autonomy and Creativity (8 participants):** Sustained enthusiasm was fostered by control over the story and self-direction in design. One senior political correspondent explained, "Being able to work on a beat that I really do enjoy has only helped decrease the rate of burnout. I do have an interest in it. I am passionate about it. I'm producing a better work" (P6, Senior Political Correspondent, Market 50-100, he/him).
- **Positive Reinforcement and Feedback (8 participants):** Motivation was greatly enhanced due to acknowledgment from community members and managers. Journalists were able to attain recognition and felt their contributions were appreciated through acts of kindness, such as "win jars" which were initiatives to collect anonymous compliments.

Suggestions for Newsroom Managers (RQ4)

Based on the responses of all participants, the following actionable items offer recommendations for managers to alleviate burnout:

- **Be Available and Transparent:** Participants emphasized the need for 'open door' policies and check-in opportunities that allow staff to have the work safe space to discuss their challenges.
- **Prioritize Mental Health Resources:** Participants pointed to the need for more accessible, more visible, and free therapy as well as more mental health resources as they described current mental health resources as being relegated to only the onboarding process.
- **Reduce Workload, Increase Resources:** Participants pointed to staffing models, paying more, and the MMJ model as things that need to be reconsidered and that need to be changed. As one journalist stated, 'I think people would be a lot more willing to put up with bulls— if they were paid for it' (P7, News Producer, Market 50-100, she/her).

- **Listen To and Trust Your Journalists:** Participants described the need for managers to take concerns around their safety and the work they are being asked to do seriously rather than dismiss them.

Suggestions for Journalism Educators (RQ5)

The proposed changes to education included:

Transparency is key (18 Participants): One of the most impactful recommendations involved the need for frank conversations about low pay, the stressful nature of the work, and the mental health challenges involved. Participants want educators to move beyond blanket warnings to address the full scope of the situation.

Not just the technical skills. (6 Participants): Journalists said that alongside journalism, business skills need to be taught, including self-advocacy and contract negotiation.

simulate the 'real world' (4 Participants): Some participants suggested that curricula be designed to simulate the high-pressure tasks, deadlines, and workflows of a real industry newsroom to better equip students for the workforce.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The elevated burnout levels of Generation Z television journalists are documented in this study, as 92% of the journalists reported this phenomenon. This is the first study to explore the interaction of the industry and the generation in response to the systemic barriers to develop burnout. The journalists' reported frameworks align with the modern theorists' frameworks but also provide new understandings of the frameworks because of the journalists' experience in the contemporary industry.

When comparing the burnout definitions, the participants emphasized emotional and existential realms beyond simple exhaustion. The participants, within the exhaustion and cynicism realms, discussed the inefficacy. This is particularly striking because there was a focus on the lost passion and forgotten purpose that was once the driving force that sustained them in the field, which was journalism. This suggests that the burnout phenomenon, as emotionally constricting as described and to the levels of Jaffe's burnout levels, represents a shift in everything the person once held near and dear to them, for the new generation. The tension of the participants constantly working and burnout is a reflection of the sustaining passion for the field of journalism. This is a unique comparison to the other members of Gen Z to explain the phenomenon of distress.

Being able to use JD-R theory in considering this case shows how specific work environment inequities are present. The participants reiterated many chronic works demands. Their work requires a lot yet are constantly unable to fulfill staffing, time resources, etc. Negative work settings are amplified by exposure to trauma. The lack of these resources is at the heart of strong disengagement, a factor that JD-R additionally brings in. Structural disengagement also brings in the lack of resource denial, management of these factors, which at any level leads to a perceived lack of

these resources. Were present, these positive management features also relied on strong buffers of supportive relationships to at least help balance in a positive direction against extreme demands, yet more so than these supportive features. These added buffers were sometimes at least present in suffocating features of the adjustments.

Comparison with Existing Literature

At-risk journalists fit the characteristics of young, novice, high-stress, high-profile work (Cook&Banks 1993). With work overload having received a lot of attention, this study is concerned with the new contemporary multipliers (MC) risks stemming from the caustic media ecosystem within which multipliers work, including chronic burnout, the additional social media responsibilities, and the MMJ model singularity.”

The work demands and resources continue to electronically match, adjust, and differentiate within the JD-R model in journalism (Chan et al 2015), trouble this time focusing on journalism as a resource, which has previously been overlooked within the JD-R framework as applied to journalists, with a few exceptions. For any positive reinforcement to function as a motivational factor to mitigate burnout, emitter journalists’ as a job resource is of real significance. For Generation Z, the motivational potential of positive outcomes is strongest, a value aligned with Generation Z and purposeful work (Mahmoud et al 2021).

Reinardy (2013a) pointed out that there is a shortage of organizational assistance from management in the form of a neglect of management’s absence of a managerial impact and lack of appreciation which participants describe as the management gap from organizational support in journalism. This has been documented as a failure to adjust wages to the rate of inflation in the economy. Financial instability, particularly among different generational groups, arises from this inability to achieve financial security, as rising living costs and inflation are the primary sources of the documented financial challenges across the generation gap.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretical Implications: This research consolidates the credibility of the JD-R theory in delineating the burnout experiences of contemporary journalists, particularly in the newer generations. Refinements remain applicable for the theory's scope in needing greater appreciation of how impact on community moderated resource availability is likely situated for each of the particular demographic clusters. Though the emergent theme of personal resources is not the primary focus here, it is an indication of how this empirical resource should be prioritized in future investigations of burnout in journalism.

Practical Implications for Newsrooms: To newsroom practitioners and managers, the approved recommendations necessitate an immediate response. There is no need for further evidence as it is clear that not addressing the systemic elements of the burnout crisis will render ‘wellness’ initiatives superficial. Genuine change can only be achieved if primary operational deficits are addressed as follows:

- **Compensation and Staffing:** Organizations need to make clear, honest, and open

assessments of whether current compensation levels afford basic financial security, and whether staffing levels are adequate relative to content production. Financial precarity is a documented driver of burnout, as such it stands to reason that it will remain one of the more straightforward mechanisms to reduce turnover.

- **Management Training:** The importance of comprehensive leadership training cannot be overstated, especially for those who are taking on supervising roles for the first time. Training should emphasize leaders' supportive roles, cross-generational competency, mental health advocacy, and the establishment of psychologically safe workspaces.
- **Operational Models:** Given the widespread distress related to the mental model of management (MMJ), there is a need to revisit this model of production, especially with regard to safety and the unsustainable workload.
- **Mental Health Integration:** More than offering Employee Assistance Programs, organizations should consider integrated mental health supports and on-site help—regular check-ins, documented trauma care protocols, and help-seeking behaviors.

Practical Implications for Education: Research has shown that there are still problems that journalism educators have to help students overcome. Suggestions for improving the curriculum include:

- **Realistic Career Preparation:** Teach students about the barriers to the industry instead of only describing it at a surface level.

Teaching Resilience: Training on boundary skills, self-advocacy, contract negotiation, and stress management should be included.

- **Critical Safety and Ethics:** Safety and ethics of exposure to trauma should be integrated.
- **Mental Health Education:** Educators should offer and encourage mental health resources students can use when working in highly stressful environments

Ethical and Social Considerations

The high levels of burnout and turnover intentions recorded in this study reflect psychological issues, yes, but they mostly reflect issues with the quality and diversity of journalism, and the deterioration of democracy as a whole. The possible loss of Generation Z journalists is a brain drain and could harm the industry profoundly. “If you want good journalism, you need healthy journalists,” Feinstein said (Reuters Institute, 2023, 29:58), and the lack of health that this study shows leads to the negative loss of healthy journalists and the loss of quality information to the public.

The ethical implications include the feedback on potential safety issues, especially when participants are MMJs sent alone to uncertain and risky environments. News companies have ethical responsibilities to their employees and self-governing ethical standards that include reasonable safety measures. The evidence of lack of safety dispersment by managers is an ethical issue.

The generational tension Also suggests ethical issues around inclusion and

retention. The more a news organization fails to adapt to the values and needs of a new generation of journalists, the more they ensure a monolithic news room that will lack a diversity of viewpoints. Generation Z journalists are more likely to place a premium on mental health and work-life balance, and this should not be seen as a setback but as an opportunity to evolve the industry in a more humane direction.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research adds to the growing literature on burnout by being the first to study the intersection of the underexplored areas of Generation Z journalists and television news. This research also adds value by being the first to examine the area through a qualitative lens by studying the lived experiences of journalists.

This research adds value by being the first to employ the JD-R theory on the population of television journalists. This research adds value by shedding light on the population-specific nuances on the role of community impacted in the television news journalism industry, particularly in the Gen Z population. This research adds value by being the first to study the phenomenon on the television news journalism industry. This research adds value by being the first to study the phenomenon and provides theoretical insight that extends to practical recommendations.

This research is timely as it chronicles the experiences of a generation that has just entered the field of journalism in an era of great change and challenge. Understanding how these journalists are likely to shape the industry and be impacted by it is a baseline that this research addresses.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the findings of the study, a number of shortcomings need to be addressed. Even though the snowball sampling technique was required to access the study's population, it may still restrict the extent to which the study's findings may be generalized. While the qualitative research methodology used was able to yield a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon, it is not able to measure the extent or statistical relations of prevailing variables. A point in time fathered cross-sectional data design captures a singular moment in time without considering the sequential progression of the phenomenon.

Some suggestions as to how future research could improve upon the current study's shortcomings include:

1. Comprehensive, national, cross-sectional, quantitative research to measure the level of burnout along with its predictors among Gen Z journalists in different media outlets.
2. Longitudinal studies to document and trace the burnout that journalists experience over different phases of their careers.
3. Studies aimed at measuring the impact of various burnout reduction interventions (e.g. training managers, changing workloads, providing mental health programs) to determine their effectiveness.
4. Studies that compare and contrast the burnout experience among different media forms, different sized markets and varied demographic characteristics.
5. An exploration of the personal resources and coping mechanisms that journalists

draw upon to be resilient.

The recent ruling by the Federal Trade Commission that may ban noncompete agreements (Rugaber, 2024) opens the door to investigating how reduced contractual obligations may influence burnout and turnover among journalists in television. This is a particularly timely research opportunity.

This research shows that Generation Z television journalists exemplify a unique double jeopardy, operating in a highly vulnerable industry with extreme levels of burnout, while simultaneously serving industry-wide potential as torchbearers for positive transformative change in the journalism culture. Their unsentimental assessment of the industry's challenges, coupled with a sense of purpose, positions this demographic cohort to become the champions of the systemic innovations required for the journalism industry to become viable, humane, and sustainable.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Findings

The consequences of the burnout crisis of television journalists of the GenZ have an impact on one's personal wellbeing and the industry as a whole. This research has shown, through the personal and professional experiences and interviews of 25 journalists, of various positions and in different market-sized companies, that burnout has become a reality. Of the 25 journalists, 23 have provided experiences and personal testimonies of burnout. It is important to note that these experiences and definitions of burnout went well beyond professional and clinical descriptions, as the journalists detailed emotional and existential issues burnout carries, such as a lack of passion, an emptiness, and a loss of purpose and fulfillment, in being a journalist.

These journalists are being overworked, and as a result burnout has become a reality. The work environments and cultures have become evaluative, and the journalists' workloads have become exceedingly disproportionate. The paradigm of 'more work in less' is the greatest source of burnout, and the journalists are being overworked with less staffing spread over traumatic work content with less to work with. The journalists are being physiologically and psychologically overworked. Further, the burnout is being exacerbated for lack of positive feedback. Deficiencies in resources are also a source of burnout, and more specifically, lack of supportive and positive feedback, lack of control and more autonomy over the work, and lack of positive feedback to change the disengaged thoughts and attitudes about work have become structures of fatalism.

Navigating Burnout's Effects Protective Factors – Making a Positive Community Impact as the Top Motivator Community Impact as the Most Motivating Resource – Strong Support from Colleagues and Creative Freedom as a Key Resource – Insufficient Support to Counter the Demands – Essential Buffer to the Overpowering Demands on Journalists.

Answers to Research Questions

The participants' in-depth stories have offered a thorough answer to the

research questions guiding this study:

RQ1: How do members of Generation Z working in television journalism conceptualize burnout? They spoke of burnout in terms of several interconnected dimensions: a linchpin of exhaustion in every realm (i.e., the physical, the mental, the emotional), an insufficiency of motivation, and a loss of passion such that work no longer shone with its "sparkle"; an existence in which, psychologically, one is "done"; a state of identity erosion from being overworked and overwhelmed; and a condition of being in an overwhelming state of "overwork". The definitions, though prevailing from the literature, side with the frameworks that brought forth the existential dimensions of the burnout construct in this generation's association with work.

RQ2: How do participants experience burnout? The manifestations of such burnout include a decline in work performance to the 'bare minimum effort' (or less), chronic negativity and cynicism, exhaustion that extends beyond the workplace, and a profound avoidance of the workplace. Furthermore, such burnout is a precursor to adverse effects on the person's mental and physical health, and the social relationships of that individual suffer as well. In this case, burnout is characterized by its potential to lead to a strong intention to resign. Most participants were actively contemplating leaving their current jobs or the industry in its entirety.

RQ3: What do Generation Z television journalists recognize to be job demands and job resources? Job demands pertain to resource availability: low income leads to monetary strain; an absence of employees results in overwhelming work assignments; time limits are impossible to work with; and we are perpetually subject to trauma. Deficiencies in management support are made worse with no support, no middle ground, and no positive encouragement. Factors such as making a difference, support from peers, ability to create, and appreciation are resources available to jobs that help with the aforementioned demands.

RQ4 & RQ5: What do journalists want news managers and educators to do? Participants requested changes to the structure of the system to allow managers to be more visible and present, offer more organizational mental health resources, improve pay and staffing, and respect journalists' limits and autonomy more. As for educators, participants focused more on the need to be true about how they should prepare to work in the industry, the importance of teaching contract negotiation and self-advocacy, and the need for course work that stresses complicated real-world scenarios to the point of building resilience without burning out.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Society

The results of the study indicate that change is warranted in several areas:

The Press: The results of this study indicate that there is a critical business case to be made to the Press for radical change in the culture of the newsroom. Staff burnout and turnover have historically been regarded as Human Resources problems; in fact, they represent a potentially existential threat to the organization. News executives must realize that the traditional "work hard, play hard; sculpt the Moon in your spare time" approach that has been the culture of virtually all newsrooms is not

sustainable in terms of the retention of Gen Z newsroom workers. News organizations must take serious actions to revamp how they structure compensation, rethink staffing models, provide management training, and clinically incorporate mental health support personnel into news organizations.

Education: Educators must help students prepare to meet the challenges that they will encounter, which in this case is an ethical as well as a pedagogical responsibility. Specifically, this will not be limited to the enhancement of students' skills in the technology of the profession, but must also include mental health literacy, training on boundary-setting, and frank discussions about the dysfunction of the profession and the industry. There is a need to rethink curricula to balance utopian dreams with the reality of preparing students to function in hostile work environments.

Industry: Professional Associations and other industry organizations need to set criteria for psychological safety, ethical workload distribution, and cohort inclusivity in all projects. The profession is in dire need of conversations about sustainable employment and the ethical placement of staff jobs. The evidence begs for conversations on sustainable production.

Democratic societies as a whole face a disheartening existential crisis when contemplating the loss of an entire cohort of journalists. Civic communities are at heightened risk of losing the dissimilar perspectives and digital talents of Generation Z. And the compromised wellbeing of journalists directly decreases the quality and public interest of democratic journalism and reporting on the issues that matter the most to the public.

Recommendations for Future Research

This paves the way for further research in the following fields:

1. **Meta-Analysis:** Research should target burnout cross media/Burnout Generation Z journalists to begin to build foundational data for media burnout cumulative cross-journalism fields.
2. **Longitudinal Studies:** Tracking journalist's career paths over a period time to focus on burnout in order to determine the critical points during career.
3. **Intervention Studies:** Test the effectiveness of the recommended interventions by participants on the workload, and management training in mental health programs.
4. **Cross Culturally:** The writer suggests looking at Generation Z journalists and how burnout works with various media systems and cultures to determine the structural and cultural systems that deal with their wellbeing.
5. **Personal Resources:** Optimism, resilience and other personal attributes journalists to sustain themselves, strategies could be put in place on an individual basis.

Final Reflections

This study reflects an analysis of the perception of some members of an emerging generation of journalists. These captured voices reflect insight warnings and opportunities within the profession. These Gen Z Television journalists entering the field of work are die-hard, committed to the work within the field, and they

possess an understanding of the challenges and issues within the industry. Their ability to identify challenges and actively work to solve challenges is indicative of their *rejection of journalistic work*.

The *burnout* crisis is an *ongoing hostile* environment and is not the problem of the journalists, more so, it reflects the structure and operational decisions within the specific audiovisual and cultural work environment. To solve the crisis requires a detailed and courageous analysis of how journalism is produced, and the human cost associated it. The proposed solutions by the participants (in the study e.g. fair remuneration, sufficient staffing, and supportive management along with realistic adequate facilitation of work) are not overly extreme solutions, rather they are *the* necessary and primary solutions associated with any healthy or *sustainable* profession.

One concludes succinctly in stating, "journalism and burnout have become 'pretty good friends.'" Considering the nature of the field, burning out is to be expected, the question then becomes, can the industry be better? Moving to and building a new relationship centered around care, sustainability, and a goal. The future of journalism is in the hands of the younger generation and the ability to provide the necessary framework/prerequisites for these individuals to succeed and achieve the goals journalism holds for democracy. This study expresses the thought processes of clear-cut generation Z journalists who can see the obstacles in the industry and have the desire/passion to create new alternatives, the question is, will the industry listen?

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