

Argentine journalists producing news during COVID-19: Stress and job satisfaction

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to have a more significant impact in developing countries like Argentina: as social inequalities increased, vaccination was delayed, and lockdowns were extended. Argentina had one of the strictest and longest lockdowns in the world: from March 20 to November 9, 2020. Despite most of the activities being suspended or reduced, the number of new cases grew steadily, and journalism was one of the professions that remained active throughout this exceptional period. This study explores how Argentine journalists were challenged during the pandemic regarding their emotional health, stress and job dissatisfaction. For this investigation, a survey of Argentine journalists (n=50) was conducted focusing on stress, occupational stress, and job satisfaction measurement scales; in addition, two editors (from a newspaper and a news agency) were interviewed. The findings indicate that their constant exposure to the pandemic, accompanied by feelings of uncertainty, left them with no room to assess their well-being. The results show three primary aspects related to compassion fatigue: emotional exhaustion (closely related to anxiety), difficulty falling asleep, and headaches.

Keywords

Anxiety, Argentina, compassion fatigue, job dissatisfaction, journalists, occupational stress, pandemic.

Introduction

Over the last decades, an increasing body of media research shows that journalists are struggling to balance their personal and professional boundaries

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in terms of emotions and that during the pandemic, this situation appears to have worsened. Media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic was highly stressful for communication professionals, particularly in countries such as Argentina, where the number of infections and mortality rates were extremely high. Since March 2020, when the quarantine was decreed as a preventive measure against the coronavirus outbreak, “the freedom of expression and the role of independent journalism have been under permanent threat” (Giudici, 2021: 21). This change caused by the pandemic for journalists, accompanied by the feeling of threat and stress, could lead to compassion fatigue, a form of traumatic stress resulting from repeated encounters with victims of trauma and traumatic situations. While compassion fatigue is often studied in counselors, nurses, and first responders, this current study applies the concept to journalists who often encounter similar victims and traumatic scenes. (Dworznik-Hoak, 2017).

Covering tragedy is in every reporter’s job description; however, journalists do not always have the emotional tools to deal with crisis events. Reporting on COVID-19 was the priority in a context where cultural events, sports, and travel were halted, and many journalists adapted their writing and knowledge to the needs of society while also adapting themselves as citizens and workers to produce and process the facts in the best way they could. Thus, journalists were exposed to stories that contained elements of trauma that were not just protracted; it became worse with time as the pandemic in Argentina continued to show high mortality rates. Journalists were witnessing individual and collective grief at high levels (ADEPA, 2021; Clay, 2020; Newman et al., 2003: 4).

Even if the work circumstances during the pandemic were exceptional and the journalists had high exposure to contagion, several scholars agree that the role of a journalist is integral to ensure that we, as the public, are informed about global issues (Deuze, 2019; Jukes, 2020; Kotisová, 2019). Journalists frequently work with tight deadlines, investigating stories that cover a wide range of tragedies, which may involve putting themselves at risk (Feinstein et al., 2002). Many note that journalists are highly susceptible to stressor-related psychopathology (Feinstein et al., 2002; Morales et al., 2014, cited in Tyson & Wild, 2021: 8536).

Reporters covering the pandemic wrote about the hypothetical impacts and death toll increases; they were also direct witnesses at hospitals and suffered the loss of their own family members and close friends. “The (trauma) reporting was coupled with personal experience of living through it and anxiety about loved ones at risk from the virus” (imunjak, 2021: 320). Early studies on journalists’ work and exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed high

levels of anxiety and work-related stress (Crowley, 2021; Selva, & Feinstein, 2020).

On the other hand, an increase in misinformation concerning the pandemic has been reported in many studies, where most interviewed journalists stated encountering misinformation at least once a week (Posetti et al., 2020: 12). This “disinfodemic,” as stated by Jaakkola and Skulte (2023: 028), causes journalists’ work conditions to worsen to a great extent. It was also observed that during the first stages of the pandemic, there was a “crisis coverage gap” in which the public interest and the information that was being covered by journalism went in different directions, as the media usually focused on economic indicators and the general population was more interested in practical day-to-day information (Quandt, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2022: 926).

This continuous accumulation of information during the pandemic—in many cases produced and processed from journalists’ homes—contributed to increasing their stress levels. Based on the interviews conducted for this study with two media editors, this stress could have been increased, according to Editor 1, due “to the continuous uncertainty about the lockdown, the vaccine incoming and their efficiency” (Personal communication, 2022). This situation happened in addition to “the lack of adequate work environments; many journalists had to share their computers with the rest of their family members, especially those with children in school. Moreover, they had to face technological gaps that affect the availability of tools and the challenging connections to the Internet,” specified Editor 2 (Personal communication, 2022). Besides the omnipresence of the virus, the economic situation continued to be a challenge for journalists in Argentina, as indicated by a recent study by the Forum for Argentine Journalism (FOPEA, 2021a; 2021b). The report explains how the tendency towards work precariousness grew in the country’s media, providing data such as seven out of ten media lacked non-supervisory journalists; 66.6% of surveyed media replied that they lacked staff registered with the compensation policy providing the greatest coverage of rights. The investigation concludes that most local journalists work in precarious conditions and find themselves forced to deal with high levels of instability (FOPEA, 2021a, 2021b). According to *mbito Financiero* (2022), concerning the journalists’ working conditions, it was in a context where 2.1 million people were infected with coronavirus, and 52,000 deaths were registered during the first year of the pandemic.

Based on the presented arguments, instability at work, social and affective, which added to the contextual conditions, result in a growing state of emotional precariousness in times of crises where stress and personality changes will

play an important role. Following Thomson (2021), we explore three areas regarding the emotional work of journalists: (1) the suppression or denial of emotions in journalism can influence the performance of journalistic practice; (2) ignoring or marginalizing the work of journalists can have a negative impact on their well-being and mental health; and (3) normalizing conversations about emotions in journalistic work can benefit their mental health.

Faced with this scenario in the South American country, the pandemic also represented a challenge for journalists globally, although Latin America was the region where the most deaths had been registered (Mathieu et al., 2020). More than 600 journalists died of COVID-19 in 59 countries over ten months in 2020 (Press Emblem Campaign, 2021).

Although the economic situation for journalists in Argentina was a matter of concern with the arrival of the pandemic, it only exacerbated this problem in a work environment that did not seem to be friendly. In a report on *El periodismo durante la pandemia* (Journalism during the pandemic) (FOPEA, 2021a), it is noted that attacks on Argentine journalists were on the rise, going from 58 cases registered in 2019 to 82 in 2020, with journalists who work on television being the most attacked (24%). Since the beginning of the outbreak, journalists described what was happening, kept the public up to date on relevant issues, and occasionally contributed to the recovery, care, and preventative measures of their community.

Even if this study analyzes the possible stress traits in Argentine journalists during the pandemic, we believe it is important to specify that this population has also been challenged in recent times by the precariousness of salaries and an economy that at times is uncertain. In other words, the pandemic is not the only thing that has worried Argentine journalists. The economic situation associated with rising inflation has generated precariousness in different areas of work, including journalism. In August 2023, the interannual inflation reached 124.4%, (INDEC, 2023) and it is expected that by the end of the year inflation will reach between 140% and 190% (Bloomberglinea, 2023).

For a better understanding of journalists' situation during before and after the pandemic, a research conducted by SiPreBA confirmend that between 2018-2019 around 3,100 journalists lost their jobs in Buenos Aires and over 4,500 in the country. In addition, the Argentine Journalism Forum (FOPEA, 2021) highlights that most local journalists work in precarious conditions and find themselves forced to deal with high levels of instability. Another study published by SiPreBA (2022) confirms that one in 10 journalists works for a self-managed media company and reveals that 14% were fired from the press industry during the last five years.

This article investigates how journalists experienced remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects on their psycho-emotional health. Theoretically, we depart from occupational stress and job satisfaction in order to understand their emotional situation during the lockdown. Reflections are made on occupational stress associated with the pandemic, and the scope of self-care as a tool for future action. This descriptive and exploratory study aims to comprehend the journalists' emotional health, work environment, and occupational stress during the lockdown in Argentina. Three research questions guide this study.

RQ1: Did the journalists develop any type of stress during the period in which they worked from home?

RQ2: Did the relationship with colleagues during this exceptional period influenced the journalists' job satisfaction?

RQ3: Could the survey results reveal possible indicators of compassion fatigue?

Theoretical framework

It is well known that journalists are professionals who deal with pressure on a daily basis. They have to assure the media that they are capable of providing first-hand news and with a high level of exposure (in this particular case, to maladies such as COVID-19 and emotional exposure) to the people struggling with the loss of loved ones.

Bos et al. (2004) show that occupations other than journalism, such as police officers, firefighters, and medical emergency staff, where the employees act as first responders, are highly stressful. Still, it is not taken into consideration that in many situations to which first responders are exposed, journalists are also present (accidents, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, amongst others). However, journalists may not be aware of the degree to which their work demands impact their emotional health. This applies not only to war correspondents but also to employees of small, medium, and large media companies. While research has been published on correspondents as responders, some note that journalists may not have access to appropriate assistance to deal with the impacts of occupational stress (Osofsky et al., 2005; Stroebe, & Schut, 1999). Monteiro and colleagues (2015) suggest that more knowledge of journalists' occupational stress variables is needed to develop training plans and support services for these professionals.

Like other professions, journalists compete with each other to gain a wider audience, share points of view and reactions, and achieve professional recognition

from their superiors and citizens. To accomplish this, they rely on their ability to continuously adapt to modern technology to disseminate the news through media outlets and social networks. However, transcending digital divides (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2022; Escudero, 2023) in the context of the pandemic and confinement as a journalist can also be a stressful working situation, as presented throughout this study. Various researchers provide strategies that journalists employ when experiencing emotional labor, presenting them as a problem (or emotion); verbal processing with peers and personal networks (seeking support, using humor, debriefing); internal processing (introspection, acceptance, rumination, positive reappraisal, perspective taking); attentional deployment (following routines, activities such as exercise); boundary setting (not checking emails on days off); formal strategies such as counseling and therapy (Hughes et al., 2021; Miller, & Lewis, 2020; Thomson, 2018).

Occupational stress

The research on occupational stress among journalists is receiving more significant interest in academia. Experiencing an exceptional situation, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, has revealed how challenging and stressful this occupation can be. Even if it is reported from home and not directly on the scene of a traumatic event, the exposition of the news related to illness, death, and infection, has an impact on the media workers. According to Editor 1, “It was a difficult period for many; the thing is that in the case of journalists, as we were carrying out our duty, what we couldn’t do was precisely to disconnect from the pandemic, the number of infected, our own numbers of infected, and the restrictions. The subject was being covered in all sections, and it had a great transcendence. We couldn’t have a respite.” In this sense, it is observed that COVID-19 was a transversal in all editorial offices, as it embraced every division; it was an unavoidable subject.

Journalists, due to daily professional demands, are exposed to intense occupational stress that can lead to compassion fatigue. A systematic review of job demands, coping, and impacts of occupational stress among journalists shows how journalists experience considerable stress, quality of life deterioration, and consider leaving the profession (Monteiro et al., 2015).

A key aspect of occupational stress is its direct impact on people’s health and relations: physical illness, substance abuse, family relations, and professional satisfaction (Nelson, & Simmons, 2003; Stroebe, & Schut, 1999). More precisely, the impact of occupational stress may be experienced short, middle, or long term by these professionals depending on the effectiveness of the selected coping strategies and their resilient capacities to manage the work-related stress. According to Duran

(2010:71), “occupational stress has been a traditionally important subject at an organizational level, given its close link to workers’ health and, thereby, its impact on the administration of economic and human resources in organizations.” This is one of the reasons behind the extensive range of research on work-related stress, particularly from an organizational psychology point of view (Schaper, 2004).

From the psychological perspective, Lazarus’s (1999) study on stress and emotion is of particular importance. He notes the existence of three interrelated components in the stress process: situation, personal resources, and the person’s perception of their situation and resources. This interrelation accounts for the effect of stress, not only in how the person functions as a worker; but also in the cognitive, affective, and social spheres. The wide-ranging impact of work-related stress, its risks, and culture has consequences for mental and physical health and organizations. The impact can be seen in how this process greatly influences performance, motivation, and the quality of life of workers, the turnover and progressive withdrawal from jobs, and the resulting impact of these situations on productivity (Arias-Gallegos, 2012: 525).

Osofsky et al. (2005) focused on the health of war journalists, while Aoki et al. (2012) emphasized mental health impacts, perceptions, and attitudes of journalists. Perrault and Perrault’s (2021) research found that journalists felt vulnerable during the pandemic, fearing for their health and jobs, and felt a responsibility to produce and deliver relevant information to their audiences.

Compassion fatigue

In the context of a long-lasting pandemic, we assess the presence of compassion fatigue, which refers to stress resulting from the traumatized individual and not the trauma itself; it involves an intense state of stress or undue concern for the cognitive, physical, psychological, and emotional pain and suffering of trauma survivors. Compassion fatigue, also known as “vicarious traumatization” or secondary traumatization (Figley, 2002: 1433), is related to the emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events. Different studies confirm that journalists are exposed to events that mental health professionals deem traumatic (Feinstein et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2003; Osmann et al., 2020; Pyevich et al., 2003). “Compassion fatigue can occur due to exposure to one case or can be due to a cumulative level of trauma” (Cocker, & Joss, 2016: 618).

The common symptoms of compassion fatigue include chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, feelings of inequity toward the therapeutic or caregiver relationship, irritability, feelings of self-contempt, difficulty sleeping, weight loss, and headaches. According to Stifter (n.d.), tears,

exhaustion, and procrastination are signs and symptoms of “vicarious stress,” or “compassion fatigue,” a condition sometimes experienced by reporters who cover stories of people who are living in very stressful situations.

Methods

This study is based on a mixed method definition: “a class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, theories and or language into a single study” (Johnson et al., 2007: 112). More specifically, these research methodologies are considered to be complementary to each other rather than incompatible with each other (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998).

To answer our research questions, a psychometric study, using a quantitative focus and a transversal design of a descriptive-correlational type, was drawn up (Hernández et al., 2006; Salkind, 1997), looking to identify and describe the psychometric characteristics of the Questionnaire on Psychosomatic Problems (CPP) by Hock (1988) and the Overall Job Satisfaction Scale (Perez-Bilbao, & Fidalgo, 1995).

The data obtained through an online platform were analyzed using a statistical analysis program (SPSS 28.0.1.1). First, a descriptive exploratory analysis was carried out; in the first sections, they locate and describe the composition of the consulted population and describe some of the variables individually. Second, a correlational analysis was done to understand to what extent the state of psycho-emotional health, stress related to remote work, and job satisfaction of journalists were experienced during the pandemic period in Argentina.

For this study, we used semi-structured interviews, presented as in-depth interviews which are used extensively as an interviewing format, possibly with an individual or sometimes even with a group (Strauss, & Corbin, 2007). These types of interviews are conducted once only and generally cover a duration of 30 minutes to more than an hour (Crabtree, & DiCicco-Blum, 2006). In addition, the semi-structured interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions, and topics were presented by the interviewer. The interviews, consisting of open and closed questions, were conducted through video calls via WhatsApp with audio-recordings.

Participants

This study consists of 50 journalists in the media industry: radio, television, written press, and online media (as news agencies). The participants voluntarily took part and answered the survey questions. Participants were from around the country with or without experience in major critical incidents (natural and human disasters) and who work for a local news organization, nationwide news channel/

company, or recovered media outlets. No specific type of journalist was excluded; thus, the sample includes journalists who may work for more than one media company. Two editors also participated: a female editor from a news agency; a male newspaper editor, both with more than 20 years of experience as journalists and leading teams before and during the lockdown associated with COVID-19 in Argentina. The editors are referred to as Editor 1 (E1) and Editor 2 (E2).

Procedure

An electronic version of the questionnaire was created using the website Encuestafacil.com, which was sent via email and WhatsApp and shared in journalists' groups and organizations for ten days (from May 21 to 31, 2021). Once the information was collected, a database was established using SPSS, where the questionnaire was uploaded.

Questionnaire survey

To understand the contextual environment in which the professionals surveyed found themselves, they were consulted on aspects that would allow us to better describe the sample population in the context of a pandemic. The survey respondents provided their personal data (name and surname, age, gender, email, media where they work, and seniority in that media).

The Questionnaire of Psychosomatic Problems related to stress (CPP) by Hock (1988) and its Spanish adaptation by Garcia et al. (1993) was used. This questionnaire asks the subjects, via six (6) Likert reagents, to answer to what degree, over the past three months, they have suffered one of the symptoms described in the 12 items that make up part of the first block of questions. The responses range from "1=Never" to "6=With great frequency."

The sum of the values of all the answers gives a score between 12 (no stress symptoms) and 72 (maximum level of stress). The midpoint is established at 42 points. For this study, it was determined that all scores under 42 are considered an absence of stress; all scores equal to or higher than 42 denote the presence of work-related stress.

In the second block of the survey, the Overall Job Satisfaction Scale (Warr et al., 1979) and the Spanish translation and adaptation by Prez-Bilbao and Fidalgo (1995) was used. It consists of 15 questions and seven Likert reagents. Responses ranged from "1=Very Unsatisfied" to "7=Very Satisfied."

This test makes it possible to obtain the general level of work satisfaction, corresponding to the sum of all the items. Its minimum value is 15 (minimum satisfaction), and its maximum value is 105 (maximum satisfaction). The midpoint or neutral point is set at 60 points. Hence, for this study, all scores under 60 denote work dissatisfaction: all scores equal to or higher than 60 denote work satisfaction.

Results

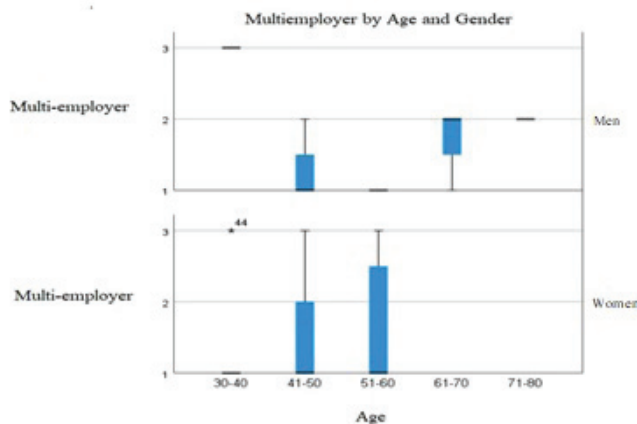
This study explores how Argentine journalists were emotionally challenged during the pandemic regarding anxiety, job dissatisfaction, and examines a possible link between stress and compassion fatigue. A survey of Argentine journalists (n=50) was conducted focusing on stress, occupational stress, and job satisfaction measurement scales. We focus on categories that allow us to account for how work stress is expressed at a physical level, the emotional levels of job satisfaction, and those aspects that show the presence of compassion fatigue in this context, identifying some of the primary emotions recorded.

The sample in this study included women (72%) and men (28%) aged between 30 and 73. The workers participating in the study are employed by various media: radio (50%), written press journalists (38%), television channels (18%), and media websites (12%).

Out of all the survey respondents, 37 (74%) work for one media company, seven (14%) for two media outlets, five (10%) for three media outlets, and one (2%) for six media outlets. For the job diversity distribution by age and gender, it is observed that, in the case of women between 40 and 60 years old, multi-employability concentration is greater, extending their labor field to more than two occupations. For men, the ranges of 41-50 and 61-70 years of age work for one to three media companies at a time. The atypical cases are concentrated for both sexes in the 30-40 age range, a stage in which a greater workload is registered (three or more media outlets), confirming multi-employment (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1

Questionnaire: In how many media do you work? Multi-employment.



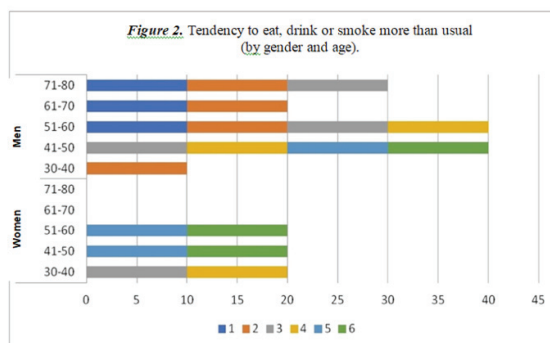
Regarding work stress, five participants (10%) showed a degree of stress. The manifestations that may be associated with tension are presented in decreasing order: the main symptoms of work stress are concentrated in insomnia problems to which are added symptoms of anxiety that are reflected in an increase in food intake and increased consumption of tobacco (72%); difficulties in getting to sleep (60%); strongly encouraged to not get up in the morning (58%); and a high rate of migraines and headaches (56%). Specifically, in the case of women between 30-60 years, the difficulties of dissatisfaction with their rest times are greater. In the case of men, the ranges of 40-50 and 61-70 are the ones who mostly express difficulties in falling asleep.

Looking at the level of physical symptoms of work stress, it is confirmed that the lack of sleep and migraines are experienced to a greater extent by women between the ages of 30-60. The participants concentrated in the ranges of 51-60 for men, and 30-40 for women, show a greater increase in dissatisfaction accompanied by recurrent headaches.

The symptoms of work stress related to increased food and tobacco consumption (72%) also show greater frequency in all ages and for both genders. Both symptoms occur more frequently between the ranges of 30-50 for women and 40-50 for men (see *Figure 2*). In that sense, Editor 1 recalls some exchanges with colleagues. E1: “At the second week of the lockdown, we were already pretty burned out. There were colleagues who went to sleep at dawn. When I woke up, I used to find a lot of messages from the chat group that we had back then” (Personal communication, 2022).

Figure 2

Tendency to eat, drink or smoke more than usual (by gender and age)



Regarding the level of job satisfaction during the COVID-19 lockdown, 38% of the journalists expressed a certain degree of dissatisfaction concerning their job stability, while 60% reported dissatisfaction when asked about the possibilities of a job promotion with their current employer. According to E2, the pandemic raised fears, dissatisfactions: “I couldn’t tell you if it was on day 8 or 10, but we hadn’t been locked up for long, and you could already see how the personalities in the team were changing: concern, fears, phobias of possible meetings, avoiding exposure in hospitals. We all respected each other, and more than a workgroup, a self-help group was created.”

According to FOPEA’s (2021) reports, the group of journalists consulted shows a trend towards multi-employment, a situation becoming more complex in the context of the pandemic and confirms the precarity indicated by previous studies. Based on participants’ responses, there are historical elements linked to low salary levels (63% of dissatisfaction) or contextual aspects that are aggravated during crises, such as the physical conditions of their work environment (37%), their extended hours (36%), the scant recognition received for their work (32%). These are reported symptoms that generate dissatisfaction.

The findings also show that their dissatisfaction with the increased time dedicated to the production of news increases with age. Twenty-nine (58%) survey participants responded that they were satisfied with their work hours during the pandemic. In terms of the salary level, although dissatisfaction is a transversal item, the greatest dissatisfaction is registered between the age ranges of 40-50 years and between women 50-60 (see *Figure 3*).

Figure 3



On the other hand, how the media managed journalists' work during the pandemic shows an accumulated percentage of dissatisfaction that represents 46% of the sample. In terms of the most satisfactory aspects of their work as journalists, the findings show that a high percentage of participants (66%) express high satisfaction with the work carried out in their respective jobs in the context of the pandemic. This satisfaction increases to the extent that the age of the respondent increases (60 to 80 years).

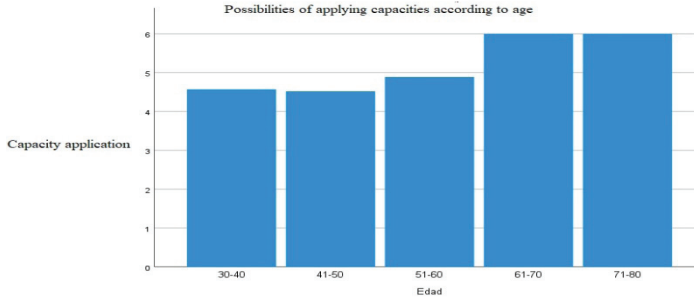
The items show satisfactory internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). According to E1, "For many, it was difficult because they had large families, or their elderly parents were far away, or they had recently lost a loved one. All of this led us to try to turn the situation around, to make it less tedious by talking about what our neighbours did from their balconies and describing the new role that the community was taking on" (Personal communication, 2022).

This high satisfaction with their work tasks is primarily focused on highlighting the benefits of their relationship with their co-workers, hierarchical managers, and coordinators, as well as the assigned responsibilities. Notably, the dissatisfied option was not chosen by any participant. This is expressed in the experience lived by E1: "While changes were noticeable in some colleagues and could be understood, as a work group, we supported each other the entire time. For some of them, talking about the infected had become a daily routine, and I think that if it worked for them to experience it that way, that's okay" (Personal communication, 2022).

The set also shows a trend towards satisfaction, while the respondents show accumulated levels (satisfied to very satisfied) that reach 72% and the chances of using their abilities (64%). When asked about their degrees of satisfaction with the freedom to choose their own work method during the COVID-19 lockdown context (*Figure 4*), 72% reported being satisfied, on average, with the possibilities offered in their respective media. In the case of men, the greatest satisfaction is in the range of 60-80 years; in the case of women, the moment of greatest satisfaction occurs at earlier ages, ranging from 30-50.

Figure 4

Freedom to choose their own work method during the COVID-19 lockdown



Conclusion

This study explores how Argentine journalists were emotionally challenged during the pandemic regarding stress and job dissatisfaction. The purpose of this study was to investigate how journalists experienced their new way of working during the COVID-19 lockdown period and the possible changes in their activities, feelings and relationships with colleagues. Since the sample is limited by the number of participants, the results achieved are also limited; Therefore, research in this line with a high number of participants will allow obtaining a better knowledge of this population during the lockdown period.

Regarding the journalists' feelings associated with stress during the lockdown (RQ1), after the analysis process, a series of elements were observed that deserve attention concerning the diversity of stress factors that have affected the work of these professionals. The findings for (RQ1) show that stress is experienced in different ways depending on gender and age range, among other issues. Through this study, we found a series of situations that affect them and occur outside working hours, like their type of rest and the possibility of being able to concentrate on other kinds of activities. The observed stress can be seen as a precursor to the discomfort caused by lack of rest (60% dissatisfaction). Participants (72%) reported feeling tense after long exposures to the computer screen. While they reported that their working hours during the pandemic were lengthened, 58% answered that they felt dissatisfied with their work schedule during the pandemic. Thus, the findings suggest that the population of remote workers during the pandemic with the most significant inconveniences were those between 41 and 50 years, an aspect that requires

further investigation to examine if it could be related to the care of others and demonstrates the limitations of this study. More specifically, the people who demonstrated this discomfort could be in charge of children/adolescents, where the requirement to connect and perform tasks online could impact the journalists' work. Being confined at home with children and family members requires multi-tasking using internet connections, tablets, computers, and mobile phones. However, the pandemic is not the only thing that has worried and stressed Argentine journalists. The economic situation associated with rising inflation has generated a lot of precariousness in different areas of work, including journalism. According to SiPreBA between 2018 and 2019 around 3,100 journalists lost their jobs in Buenos Aires and over 4,500 in the country. The Argentine Journalism Forum (FOPEA, 2021) highlights that most local journalists work in precarious conditions and find themselves forced to deal with high levels of instability and SiPreBA's research (2022) confirms that one in 10 journalists works for a self-managed media company and reveals that 14% were fired from a press company during the last 5 years.

With respect to the type of relationships between journalist peers during the lockdown (RQ2), participants reported on their employment relationship, either with colleagues or with superiors 82% satisfaction. Notably, through this study, it is evident that the highest values in the survey are reflected in the relationship that journalists maintain with their co-workers and peers, their bonds, and interactions during the lockdown. Regarding their salary, although dissatisfaction is an item that crosses the age spectrum, the data shows that the greatest dissatisfaction is between the age ranges of 40-50 and 50-60 years. Notably, wage dissatisfaction was at 63%, coinciding at a certain point with the FOPEA's (2021) study, noting that 66.6% represented job precariousness.

Finally, regarding the findings related to possible indicators of compassion fatigue (RQ3), the participants responded that the lockdown factor and the use and exposure to electronic devices for work and socialization were considered disturbing elements. The results show that stress is intimately related to the environment and the contextual conditions in which it develops: in this case, the pandemic period during working hours and in other spaces in the context of a long lockdown. Guerrero-Barona and Vicente-Castro (2001) found a series of similarities that make the individual consider more stressful environmental conditions, including uncertainty, lack of information, novelty, ambiguity, duration, and imminence of a situation. Based on our measurements and interviews, we find the presence of three aspects related to compassion fatigue

that deserve further study: emotional exhaustion, difficulty sleeping, and headaches.

This study is the first to investigate the potential stress factors in Argentine journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings confirm the need to advance research that delves into the consequences of stress and compassion fatigue to establish lines of support and monitoring aimed at this sector of media professionals.

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