

THIRD EDITION

Building Resilient News People in Asia and the Pacific

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If you have any comments or enquiries about
the report, please email us at
asiavision@abu.org.my

Contributing Authors:

Mosiqi Archarya (ABC)
Tia Soakai (PCBL)
A. Boldsaikhan (TV5)
Chevaan Daniel (CMG)
Tri Febriana (TVRI)
Kati Bremme (France Télévisions)
Kate de Pury (EBU)
Dipak Bhattarai (BBC Media Action)
Leona O'Neill (MediaStrong)
Hanna Harvima (UNI Global Union)
Au Yi Xuen (UOW Malaysia)
Liew Ti Tian (UOW Malaysia)
Dr Muhammad Naim Muhammad Ali (MMU Malaysia)

The Future of News Survey was conducted
in collaboration with University of Wollongong Malaysia

Report compiled by:
Indra Singh

Report edited by:
Nerina Rosli

Design and layout by:
Nadzim Zainal

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Ahmed Nadeem
ABU Secretary-General

As the pace of change in our industry continues to accelerate, the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) remains steadfast in its mission of media development and collaboration. While technology and digital transformation are driving rapid change across broadcasting, people remain our greatest asset and the true force behind transformation. The future of broadcasting ultimately depends on the strength, resilience, skills and wellbeing of our people.

It is often said that “adversity is the mother of invention”. Today, as we navigate the rapid growth of artificial intelligence and the shifting demands of new platforms, the challenges facing our profession are being met with a new kind of innovation: a commitment to human resilience.

This third edition, ***Building Resilient Media People in Asia and the Pacific***, continues the tradition established by our reports on ***The Future of News*** and ***Innovations in News***. It provides the broadcasting community with additional context and issues for consideration based on the real-world experiences of those working on the front lines of journalism.

By sharing these insights and exploring sustainable practices for our newsrooms, we ensure that ABU remains a vital platform for knowledge exchange and collective growth.

I commend this report to you. As always, our members have been generous with their expertise and insights and wish to share their solutions for a more resilient and connected media community.

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Indra Singh

Director, ABU News

We are proud to launch the third edition of this report during the 2026 Global News Forum. This edition feels especially close to home because it turns the lens on media workers themselves and raises a question I often return to: Who is there for us?

Building Resilient Media People in Asia and the Pacific is far more than just a title—it is an urgent conversation that has been taking place, and will continue to be debated, for years to come. But right now, at this very moment, we need to pause, take a breath, and ask ourselves a fundamental question: Are we okay?

Our media family is facing unprecedented pressure:

- **Relentless crisis coverage:** Reporting on continuous crises both at home and abroad takes an undeniable personal toll.
- **Technological disruption:** Deep uncertainties surrounding artificial intelligence and its long-term impact on our craft weigh heavily on our newsrooms.
- **Financial Instability:** Growing economic vulnerability continues to threaten the sustainability of our organisations.

These are the persistent issues plaguing our people. In times like these, our media family needs guidance. We need to be like a wise grandparent—offering trusted counsel and practical wisdom so our “family” can adapt, adjust, and overcome the overwhelming stress and burnout defining our industry today.

This brings us back to the core question: How do we build resilient media people? Mind you, it is not that our journalists and content creators haven't been resilient—they demonstrate incredible grit every single day. Perhaps it is simply time to upgrade our resilience antidote.

Learning from many of our esteemed colleagues across the Asia-Pacific region, it is encouraging to see real progress regarding mental health awareness among media workers. This is a vital milestone, but does the buck stop there? Is a single box ticked enough? What more can—and must—we do?

My highest respect goes to those who continue to press on in the field every day. At the same time, we must hold space for and honour those who were forced to leave the industry due to the sheer severity of work-induced stress and burnout.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who took the time to contribute their invaluable insights to this edition. My sincere thanks also go to my dedicated team at the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) for their relentless efforts to ensure our members remain at the absolute forefront of everything we do.



Nerina Rosli

News Project
Officer & Editor of
Building Resilient
Media People in
Asia and the Pacific

Building Resilient Media People in Asia and the Pacific is the result of a collective effort by a diverse community of media professionals.

It reflects the voices of reporters, journalists, editors, and anchorpeople, as well as the behind-the-scenes teams: stringers, social media curators, camera people, broadcast engineers, producers, crew drivers, public relations officers, makeup artists, interns and media students.

Their experiences are presented by essay contributions from five ABU member organisations, five strategic partners, a media academic, and two media students.

This edition is equipped with a comprehensive analysis of this year's Future of News Survey, which was conducted in collaboration with the University of Wollongong Malaysia. The research was led by Dr Muhammad Naim Muhammad Ali, who was invited to build upon the foundations of the 2024 and 2025 surveys with an updated focus on the mental health of media professionals.

The survey was conducted over three months between March 27 and June 26, including outreach at the ABU Digital Broadcasting Symposium in Kuala Lumpur, the Pacific Media Partnership Conference in Papua New Guinea, the ABU Media Summit on Climate Action and Disaster Prevention & ABU AI Forum in Paro, Bhutan.

The ABU Secretariat worked relentlessly, messaging, emailing, and calling potential respondents to secure a minimum of three participants from each country, ensuring the findings were truly representative of the region.

One hundred and three newsroom employees answered the survey — the highest participation rate recorded to date — representing 43 organisations from 27 member countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Fiji, France, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

We have carefully chosen a palette of burnt orange, terracotta, amber, warm sand, and deep sienna for this report cover. These earthy tones are intended to capture the themes of resilience, humanity, and optimism that reflect the contents of this report.

This report is a document from the media people, about the media people, and for the media people.



**Dr Muhammad Naim
Muhamad Ali**

Senior Lecturer
Multimedia University
Malaysia

Prepared in collaboration
with the Asia-Pacific
Broadcasting Union (ABU)
for the 2026 Global News
Forum, Sydney

103 respondents
43 broadcasting and media
organisations
25 countries and territories

June 2026

*Research conducted during
the author's tenure at the
University of Wollongong
Malaysia.*

RESILIENT JOURNALISM

*SAFEGUARDING TRUTH AND
WELLBEING*

THE MENTAL HEALTH OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

A Survey-Based Report for Public Media Leaders and
Practitioners
Findings from the Future of News Survey 2026

1. Executive Summary

Behind every bulletin, byline, and broadcast sits a person absorbing the pressure of the news cycle. This report asks how those people are actually holding up — and, just as importantly, what helps or harms them. Rather than treating editorial trust, AI adoption, and talent retention as separate industry debates, we examine them together, because the data suggest they converge on the wellbeing of the workforce in ways that are hard to see when each topic sits in its own silo.

The evidence comes from 103 responses to the Future of News Survey 2026, drawn from broadcasting and journalism professionals across 43 media organisations in 25 countries and territories. That reach makes this a useful global snapshot — though we would stop short of calling it a definitive one. The sample leans toward management and public-service broadcasters, and some subgroups are small, so

the findings are best read as a well-evidenced picture of this particular slice of the industry rather than a census of it (Section 11 sets out the boundaries in full).

We report every finding through two lenses. First, the plain percentages: who agreed, who disagreed. Second, formal statistical tests against a neutral midpoint — one-sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA across subgroups, and significance-tested Pearson correlations — which tell us whether a pattern is likely to be real or could plausibly have arisen by chance in a sample this size. The two readings sometimes diverge. When they do, that divergence is itself part of the story.

Pride and purpose are strong; common stress signals are not statistically elevated

Pride runs high in this workforce. So does purpose. Pride in one's work (**$M = 4.77$, $p < .001$; 69% agree**) and a sense of contributing to society ($M = 4.86$, $p < .001$; 69% agree) sit significantly above neutral, among the strongest results anywhere in the survey. Several

commonly cited concerns, by contrast, land at statistical neutral once we test them properly: feeling stressed ($M = 3.60$; 30% agree, 24% disagree), burnout symptoms ($M = 3.37$; 24% agree, 31% disagree), working more than 10 hours a day ($M = 3.46$; 29% agree, 33% disagree), and working weekends ($M = 3.47$; 32% agree, 37% disagree) are all statistically indistinguishable from the midpoint (all $p > .35$).

This does not mean nobody is strained. Wide standard deviations on these items (1.4–1.6) point to real variation across individuals, and a headline like “30% report regular stress” can overstate average severity while quietly omitting the 70% who do not report elevated stress. Some risk items even sit significantly below neutral — considering leaving journalism for mental-health reasons ($M = 2.35$, $p < .001$; 10% agree, 67% disagree) and work harming physical health ($M = 3.03$, $p = .002$; 18% agree, 44% disagree). On these measures, at least within this sample, the workforce appears to be coping better than a neutral baseline would predict.

KEY FINDING

Pride and purpose are strongly elevated (both $p < .001$), a genuine protective resource. Stress, burnout, long hours, and weekend work are not statistically elevated overall (all $p > .35$).

The confirmed mental-health gaps are specific: trauma training and AI governance, not general burnout

The gaps the data do confirm are narrow and nameable. Training on coping with traumatic content sits significantly below neutral ($M = 3.06$, $p = .004$; only 19% agree it is provided, 44% disagree). Access to employer mental-health services (34% agree, 29% disagree) and clarity of anti-harassment policy (29% agree, 31% disagree) both land at statistical neutral ($p = .43$ and $p = .66$) — genuinely ambiguous, neither strength nor confirmed failure. Where harassment does occur, though, its mental-health toll appears severe: $r = 0.73$, $p < .001$, the strongest correlation in the entire dataset. And while AI adoption is significantly above neutral (daily use $M = 4.40$, $p < .001$; 50% agree), governance has not kept pace — AI-training adequacy does not reach significance ($M = 3.65$, $p = .14$; 26% agree, 26% disagree), even as concern about AI-driven misinformation runs strongly elevated ($M = 4.85$, $p < .001$; 67% agree). Adoption, in short, seems to have outrun governance, and the people expected to work inside that gap are feeling it.

A possible leadership-frontline gap in who feels the strain

Senior managers report descriptively lower burnout ($M = 2.87$) than middle managers ($M = 3.42$) and reporters ($M = 3.33$). The gap looks meaningful. It is not yet proven. A one-way ANOVA across all role categories falls short of significance ($F(6,96) = 1.13$, $p = .353$, $\eta^2 = 0.066$), as does a targeted comparison between the two largest groups ($t = 1.50$, $p = .140$, $d = 0.42$ — a moderate effect size). The pattern is directionally consistent with what other high-pressure industries report, and it deserves close tracking in future waves, but at this sample size we can only call it suggestive; Section 10.3 sets out how a better-powered study could settle it.

“Doing research is fascinating, especially when the findings aren’t what you expect. I’m often more curious about the negative results than the positive ones. For example, if 5% say their newsroom doesn’t verify information before publishing, I want to know why. What’s happening behind that number? That’s the question I want to unravel.”

Why this matters beyond mental health itself: truth and wellbeing move together

The composite Truth Index and Wellbeing Index correlate strongly and significantly ($r = 0.63$, $p < .001$, $n = 103$) — the single strongest organisational-level relationship in this survey. Newsrooms whose staff report stronger editorial safeguards, such as consistent verification practice ($M = 5.16$ of 6, $p < .001$; 81% agree, the strongest single result in the survey) and trust in leadership, also tend to report better staff wellbeing, and a relationship this strong is very

unlikely to be chance at $n = 103$. Put simply: organisations that look after their journalists tend to be the ones whose journalism holds up best under scrutiny. One caution belongs here, and we return to it in Section 5: this is a cross-sectional correlation, so it cannot tell us which way the causal arrow runs. What it can support is this report's central argument — that mental health is not a wellbeing issue running alongside editorial quality but plausibly a condition for it, and that wellbeing investment therefore deserves to be framed as editorial-quality investment (Section 10).

KEY FINDING

Truth and Wellbeing move together ($r = 0.63$, $p < .001$): mental health is not separate from editorial quality — in this sample, the two are statistically tied.

The rest of this report develops the mental-health evidence in full statistical detail (Section 3), examines editorial trust, AI adoption, and talent retention as factors bearing on it (Sections 4–7), integrates open-ended responses

from 96–102 respondents per question (Section 8), and closes with recommendations grounded specifically in the statistically confirmed patterns above (Section 10).

2. Methodology and Respondent Profile

2.1 How this report was built, and how to read it

We built this analysis on a cleaned dataset of 103 responses to the Future of News Survey 2026. The survey asked 75 attitudinal questions on a six-point agreement scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) across five themes — organisational strategy, trust and editorial integrity, mental health and wellbeing, AI in the newsroom, and talent and training — plus seven background questions and six open-ended questions inviting respondents to answer in their own words.

We wrote this report for working journalists, editors, and media managers rather than for an academic audience, so it reads at two levels. Each finding appears first in plain language: what we found, and what it means in practice. The supporting numbers follow in brackets for readers who want the detail or need to cite the report formally. A short glossary below covers the handful of statistical terms we use, so the brackets never become a barrier to the finding itself.

A quick guide to the statistics used in this report

- Significant / not significant: whether a result is likely to be real or could easily have happened by chance given the sample size. “Significant” does not mean “large” or “important”; it means the evidence for the pattern is strong enough to trust.
- p-value: the chance that a finding is a fluke. A p-value under .05 (written $p < .05$) means less than a 1-in-20 chance of that; under .001 means less than 1-in-1,000. Smaller is stronger evidence.
- % agree / % disagree: the share of respondents who chose 5 or 6 on the scale (agree or strongly agree) versus 1 or 2 (disagree or strongly disagree). Because 3 and 4 count in neither, the two percentages rarely sum to 100%. We give these percentages alongside the statistical test for every finding, so readers can see both the plain scale of opinion and whether it is statistically reliable.
- Correlation (r): how strongly two things rise and fall together, from -1 (perfectly opposite) to +1 (perfectly together). An r of 0.6 or higher is a strong relationship; under 0.2 is weak.
- ANOVA / F-test: a test of whether several groups (for example, different job roles) genuinely differ on average, rather than appearing to differ just by chance.
- Effect size (Cohen's d, eta-squared): how big a difference is in practical terms, separate from whether it is statistically proven. A result can be significant but practically small — or practically large but not yet proven, especially in a smaller sample.
- Cronbach's alpha: a check on whether a set of survey questions intended to measure one thing actually hang together as one thing. Above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable; we flag the one case (Section 2.2) where that bar was not met.

The composite indices mentioned throughout — the Truth Index, Wellbeing Index, and so on — are simply averages of several related questions, combined so that a higher score always means a more favourable result. We use six such indices (Truth, Wellbeing, Strategy, AI Readiness, AI Concern, and Talent Support), plus a Burnout Score built from the five wellbeing questions that most directly describe stress and exhaustion. For the open-ended answers, we read every response, coded recurring topics into themes, and then checked the coding by hand.

2.2 Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Before drawing conclusions from any composite index, we tested its internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha — a standard reliability statistic indicating how well a set of items hangs together as one coherent construct. An index built from poorly correlated items does not measure one thing, however interesting its mean or correlations might look. We therefore

treated this check as a precondition for interpretation, not an afterthought, and we report it here on its own before any substantive findings.

Six of the seven composite indices show acceptable-to-excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.71$ to 0.93), summarised in Table A.

Composite index	k (items)	Cronbach's α	Reliability
Strategy Index	9	0.927	Excellent
Burnout Score	5	0.915	Excellent
Wellbeing Index	27	0.878	Good
Talent Support Index	9	0.854	Good
AI Readiness Index	7	0.740	Acceptable
Truth Index	10	0.711	Acceptable
AI Concern Index	3	0.169	Unacceptable: interpret with caution

Table A. Cronbach's alpha for each composite index ($n=103$), computed on the reverse-scored items consistent with each index's construction; full item-level detail, including the underlying formulas, sits in the companion data workbook.

One index misses the conventional 0.60 minimum. The AI Concern Index, built from just three items (distrust of AI output quality, personal job-loss fear, and societal AI-misinformation concern), returns $\alpha = 0.17$ — far below the threshold normally required before treating a set of items as one scale. The low score has a sensible explanation rather than pointing to a data error: someone can worry deeply about AI-driven misinformation harming society

while feeling no personal job-loss anxiety at all, so the three items simply do not move together. The practical consequence is that any finding involving this index (Sections 3.3 and 6) describes a noisy bundle of three distinct attitudes, not one coherent construct, and we flag that caveat wherever it appears. The three underlying items remain individually reliable on their own terms, and we report them separately wherever possible.

CAUTION
The AI Concern Index has unacceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.17$). Findings using this index (Sections 3.3, 6) describe three distinct attitudes bundled together, not one construct.

2.3 Who responded

Respondents work across 43 broadcasting and media organisations in 25 countries and territories. The largest concentrations come from Malaysia (20 respondents), China (10), Indonesia (6), Thailand (6), Bhutan (5), Fiji (5), and Sri Lanka (5); the remainder span Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, France, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, the Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Turkmenistan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

103	43	25	69%
Survey respondents	Organisations	Countries / territories	Have 11+ years' experience

Figure: Sample scale and composition, Future of News Survey 2026 (n=103).

The sample skews mid-to-senior. Middle management accounts for 31% of respondents and senior management for 19%; technical/engineering roles make up 15%, producers 14%, reporters/journalists 11%, digital/social media specialists 3%, and “other” 8%. Sixty-nine percent have worked in broadcasting or journalism for 11 years or more — a veteran-heavy group. (We report demographic composition descriptively, as percentages of category membership; the inferential methods above apply to the attitudinal items and indices analysed in Sections 3–8.)

Seventy percent of respondents work for public-service broadcasters, with the remainder split across commercial/private broadcasters (12%), state-owned but commercially operated organisations (9%), mixed public-commercial funding (9%), and community/non-profit media (1%). Forty-one percent report that their newsroom’s workforce grew over the past 12 months; 39% say it held steady, and 20% report a decrease.

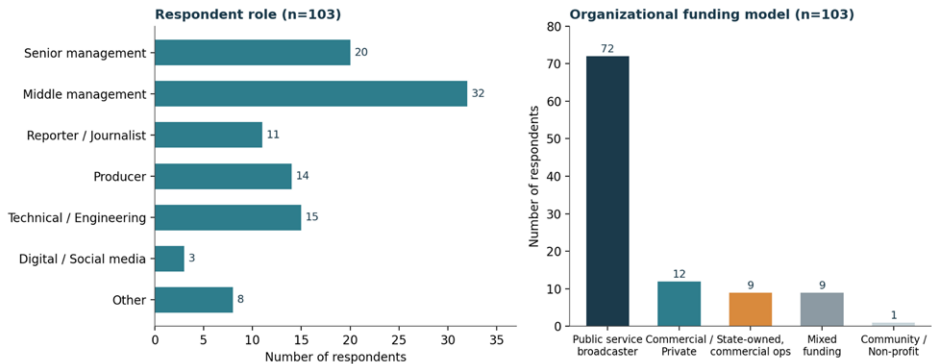


Figure 1. Respondent role and organisational funding model (n=103).

Because roughly half the sample holds management responsibilities and most respondents work in publicly funded broadcasters, the findings most credibly represent management and senior

perspectives within Asia-Pacific public-service media. Readers should keep that frame in mind throughout; Section 11 discusses it fully.

3. Mental Health and Wellbeing: The Central Focus of This Report

One concern organises this whole report: the mental health and wellbeing of the professionals who produce daily journalism, and what helps or harms it. We present that evidence first and in full, before turning to the organisational, editorial, and technological factors examined later — each of which, as the following sections show, appears to bear directly on the picture established here. As everywhere in this report, each statistical result comes paired with its own plain-percentage translation, because the two readings sometimes diverge, and that gap is itself one of the more instructive findings we have.

3.1 Strong sense of purpose; common stress signals are not statistically elevated

Two results carry real statistical weight. Pride in one's work as a journalist ($M = 4.77$, $t(102) = 9.67$, $p < .001$) and a sense of having contributed to society ($M = 4.86$, $t(102) = 11.26$, $p < .001$) both sit significantly above neutral by a wide margin — among the strongest results anywhere in the survey. They represent a genuine protective resource, and any wellbeing intervention would do well to build on it rather than overlook it.

The percentages tell the same story. Sixty-nine percent of respondents agree or strongly agree they felt proud of their work, against only 9% who disagree — roughly eight to one. The figure for contributing to society is almost identical: 69% agree, 7% disagree, closer to ten to one. These are the two most lopsided agreement splits in the wellbeing section, and they justify treating intrinsic motivation as a broadly shared asset across this workforce, not a sentiment confined to a vocal minority.

The strain indicators look different. Feeling stressed because of work ($M = 3.60$, $t(102) = 0.72$, $p = .47$), burnout symptoms ($M = 3.37$, $p = .37$), regularly working more than 10 hours a day ($M = 3.46$, $p = .78$), and regularly working weekends ($M = 3.47$, $p = .84$) all sit statistically at neutral on average. This deserves plain statement: **none of these four items shows a statistically confirmed elevation in strain across the sample as a whole.** That is not the

same as saying nobody is strained. Standard deviations of 1.4 to 1.6 signal substantial variation across individuals — some respondents are clearly under real pressure even where the average is not — and a survey mean, by construction, can hide exactly that.

The percentages explain why these four items land at neutral, and they offer the report's clearest illustration of why percentages and statistics need each other. Thirty percent agree they feel stressed because of work — but 24% disagree, a margin of only six points. Burnout symptoms split even closer: 24% agree, 31% disagree, with slightly more respondents on the disagreeing side. Long hours run 29% to 33%; weekend work runs 32% to 37% — both tilted mildly toward disagreement. In every case the agreeing share is matched or outweighed. A percentage-only headline such as "30% report regular stress" is technically accurate, but read alone it omits the 24% who actively disagree and the roughly 46% in between. That is why we treat the percentage as necessary context and the statistical test as the arbiter of whether the sample as a whole is elevated.

Several specific risk items actually sit significantly below neutral — better-than-neutral average outcomes. Considering leaving journalism for mental-health reasons ($M = 2.35$, $t(102) = -8.19$, $p < .001$), work harming

physical health ($M = 3.03$, $p = .002$), anxiety about going to work ($M = 2.84$, $p < .001$), losing sleep over work-related worry ($M = 3.11$, $p = .007$), and regular exposure to traumatic or disturbing content ($M = 2.82$, $p < .001$) all fall statistically below the midpoint: respondents on average disagree with these statements rather than merely failing to agree.

Here the margins are wide and one-sided. Only 10% agree they have considered leaving journalism for mental-health reasons, against 67%

who disagree — more than six to one. Physical-health impact runs 18% agree to 44% disagree; anxiety about work, 11% to 41%; lost sleep, 18% to 42%; traumatic-content exposure, 11% to 42%. In every case the disagreeing share is at least double the agreeing one. On these specific measures, this workforce looks, on balance, to be coping better than a neutral baseline — not simply failing to reach the bar for concern — though we would note that self-reported measures like these can understate strain in professional cultures that reward stoicism.

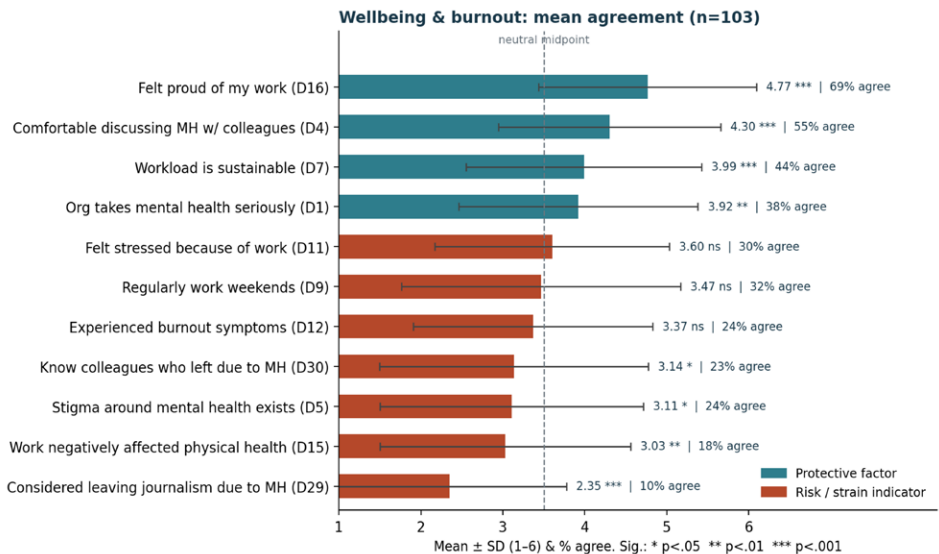


Figure 3. Mean $\pm$ SD agreement with key Wellbeing and burnout statements ($n=103$), tested against the neutral midpoint with one-sample t -tests. Teal bars indicate protective factors; rust bars indicate risk or strain indicators.

KEY FINDING

Stress, burnout symptoms, long hours, and weekend work are statistically average, not elevated (all $p > .35$). Pride and purpose, by contrast, are significantly and strongly elevated (both $p < .001$).

3.2 Where the real support gaps are

The reliable, statistically confirmed shortfalls sit in formal support infrastructure. Provision of training on coping with traumatic content falls significantly below neutral ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.52$, $t(102) = -2.95$, $p = .004$). Access to employer-provided mental health services ($M = 3.63$, $t(102) = 0.79$, $p = .43$), clarity of anti-harassment policy ($M = 3.57$, $p = .66$), and regular debriefing after traumatic events ($M = 3.22$, $p = .064$) all sit statistically at neutral. None of those three is a confirmed strength; none is a confirmed failure. Each is a genuine, measurable area of uncertainty — something an organisation cannot currently claim credit for, but also cannot be definitively faulted on from this survey alone.

The percentages show why trauma-coping training stands apart. Only 19% agree it is provided, against 44% who disagree — more than double, a gap wide enough to call this a confirmed shortfall rather than an ambiguous result. The other three items split much more evenly: mental-health service access runs 34% agree to 29% disagree, anti-harassment policy clarity 29% to 31%, trauma debriefing 20% to 34%. With roughly similar numbers satisfied and dissatisfied, neither conclusion carries — which is precisely why we describe them as genuinely ambiguous.

Relationships between variables hold up regardless of where the averages sit. Workload sustainability correlates

significantly and negatively with the Burnout Score ($r = -0.47$, $p < .001$). Long hours correlate positively with it ($r = 0.41$, $p < .001$). An organisation “taking mental health seriously” correlates negatively with burnout ($r = -0.32$, $p = .001$). The Burnout Score, in turn, correlates with considering leaving the profession ($r = 0.44$, $p < .001$) and with reported stress ($r = 0.36$, $p < .001$). Together these confirm burnout as a statistically reliable predictor of retention risk wherever it occurs — whatever the average-level findings above say about how widespread it is.

Online harassment carries the starkest association in the dataset. The correlation between experiencing harassment and harassment harming mental health is **$r = 0.73$ ($p < .001$)** — the strongest correlation we found anywhere — even though average harassment exposure itself sits significantly below neutral ($M = 2.42$, $t(102) = -7.50$, $p < .001$). Read together, the two results tell a clear story: harassment is not widespread in this sample, but where it lands, it lands hard. The correlation between anti-harassment policy and reduced mental-health impact does not reach significance ($r = -0.18$, $p = .068$) — a marginal result hinting that current policies may not yet measurably buffer the harm once it occurs, though a marginal p-value in a sample this size warrants a cautious reading in both directions.

In percentage terms, only 7% agree they have experienced online harassment because of their work; 62% disagree — nearly nine to one, which grounds the claim that harassment is not widespread here. Yet the correlation above means that within the small group who do experience it, the link to mental-health harm

approaches universal. Prevalence is low; severity, where it occurs, is high. No single percentage can show both, which is exactly why this report keeps the two questions — how common, and how serious when it happens — separate rather than collapsing them into one number.

KEY FINDING

Harassment is not widespread (mean significantly below neutral), but where it occurs, its mental-health impact is severe and almost universal ($r = 0.73$, $p < .001$) — the strongest relationship in the entire dataset.

3.3 A possible, but not yet confirmed, gap between leaders and frontline staff

A one-way ANOVA testing whether the Burnout Score differs across the seven role categories found no statistically significant difference: $F(6,96) = 1.13$, $p = .353$, $\eta^2 = 0.066$. Senior management's mean burnout score ($M = 2.87$) is descriptively lower than middle management's ($M = 3.42$) and reporters'/journalists' ($M = 3.33$), but the gap does not clear the conventional significance threshold at this sample size. A targeted comparison between the two largest groups — middle versus senior management — also falls short ($t = 1.50$, $p = .140$), though the effect size is moderate (Cohen's $d = 0.42$). In plain terms: the pattern looks real, and it is large enough to matter practically, but this sample cannot yet rule out chance as the explanation. Only a larger sample can settle the question (see Section 10.3).

The AI Concern Index, by contrast, does differ significantly by role: $F(6,96) = 3.07$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = 0.161$ — a small-to-moderate, statistically reliable effect. Middle managers ($M = 4.07$) and the very small digital/social media specialist subgroup ($M = 5.00$, $n = 3$) report the highest AI-related concern; producers ($M = 3.36$) and senior management ($M = 3.57$) report less. Two caveats apply. As Section 2.2 established, the AI Concern Index has poor internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.17$), so this role difference describes a mixed bundle of distrust, job-loss fear, and misinformation worry rather than one unified attitude — and a subgroup of three people cannot anchor any conclusion on its own. This is a finding worth revisiting at the individual-item level in future analysis, not one to treat as settled.

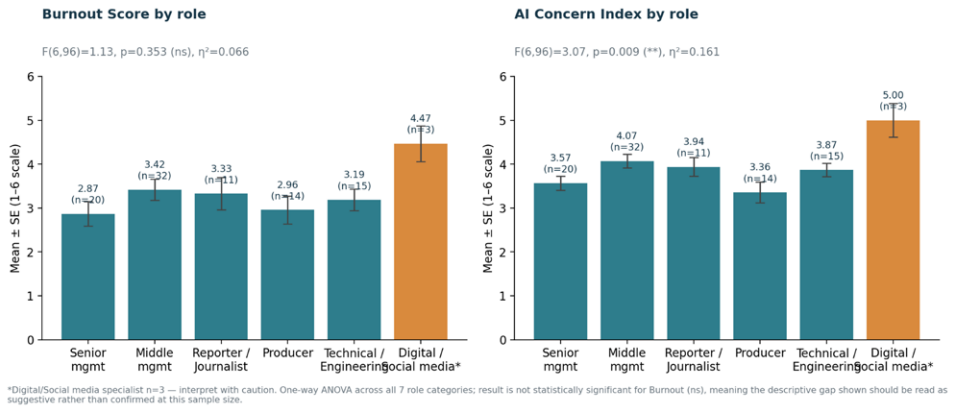


Figure 4. Burnout Score and AI Concern Index by role (mean $\pm$ SE), with one-way ANOVA results. The role-based Burnout difference is not statistically significant; the AI Concern difference is.

One-way ANOVAs testing the same composite indices by funding model and by years of experience found no statistically significant differences for any index (all $p > .05$; full F-statistics and p-values sit in the companion data workbook). Within this sample, then,

the patterns above appear broadly consistent across funding types and career stages rather than concentrated in one subgroup — though the small size of several cells means genuinely modest subgroup differences could easily escape detection here.

4. Truth: Trust, Verification and Editorial Resilience

With the central mental-health picture established, we turn to editorial trust, verification, and external pressure. These matter for this report on two counts: political pressure, commercial pressure, and eroding editorial independence are themselves documented sources of psychological strain in the wellbeing literature, and — as Section 5 goes on to show statistically — the strength of an organisation's journalism appears closely tied to the wellbeing of the people who produce it. As in Section 3, each topic below gives the statistical test first, then a plain-percentage paragraph explaining what that balance of opinion can and cannot support.

4.1 Reliability and audience trust trends

Respondents report a statistically reliable, net-positive trend on both reliability and audience trust. Agreement that public media in their country is more reliable than five years ago sits significantly above neutral ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.40$, $t(102) = 4.46$, $p < .001$), while agreement that it is less reliable sits significantly below ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.42$, $t(102) = -4.13$, $p < .001$). The two results point the same direction and corroborate each other rather than resting on a single, possibly ambiguous item. The same pattern holds for respondents' own organisations: trust increased over the past 12 months is significantly above neutral ($M = 4.21$, $p < .001$), and trust decreased is significantly below ($M = 2.74$, $p < .001$).

The percentages make the trend easy to picture. Forty-five percent agree

public media in their country is more reliable than five years ago; only 15% disagree — three to one in the favourable direction. The mirror-image item confirms rather than contradicts — just 15% agree media has become less reliable, while 43% disagree. For respondents' own organisations, 48% say audience trust rose over the past year against 12% who say it fell. None of these is a borderline split. In every case the favourable answer outnumbers the unfavourable one three or four to one, which is what lets us read the statistical result as a real, practically meaningful trend — within this sample — rather than a technical artifact of the test. Whether audiences themselves would tell the same story is, of course, a separate question this practitioner survey cannot answer.

4.2 Verification discipline is the strongest signal in the survey

Agreement that journalists consistently verify information before publication or broadcast sits significantly above neutral by a wide margin (**$M = 5.16$ of 6, $t(102) = 15.27$, $p < .001$**). This is the single strongest one-sample result across all 75 attitudinal items, and it is worth pausing on: more than any other measured belief or behaviour in this dataset, respondents across very different countries, funding models, and seniority levels converge on the

view that their newsrooms verify before they publish. Significantly above-neutral confidence in error-correction systems ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.31$, $t(102) = 7.25$, $p < .001$) and in clearly labelling AI-generated content for audiences ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.48$, $t(102) = 5.31$, $p < .001$) reinforces the picture — the strength appears to extend across the verification-and-correction process as a whole, not just one narrow item.

KEY FINDING

Verification discipline is the single strongest result in the entire survey ($M = 5.16/6$, $p < .001$), ahead of all 74 other attitudinal items tested.

As a share of respondents, the finding becomes immediately tangible. Eighty-one percent agree or strongly agree their newsroom verifies before publishing; 5% disagree — sixteen to one, the most lopsided split of any item in the survey. The supporting practices tell a similar story: 55% agree their organisation has effective error-correction systems (11% disagree), and 49% agree AI-generated content is clearly labelled for audiences (13%

disagree). In each case the agreeing group outnumbers the disagreeing group several times over — the kind of plain, communicable evidence the underlying statistics confirm but cannot, by themselves, make vivid to a non-specialist reader. One honest caveat: these are self-assessments of one's own newsroom, and professionals may rate their own verification culture more generously than an external audit would.

4.3 Trust in leadership is real, but stronger on some fronts than others

Trust that leadership prioritises journalism over commercial interests sits strongly above neutral ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.30$, $t(102) = 7.44$, $p < .001$). Trust regarding political interests is also significantly positive, with a smaller effect ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.39$, $t(102) = 4.99$, $p < .001$), as is belief that the organisation would withstand political pressure to compromise editorial standards ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.44$, $t(102) = 3.11$, $p = .002$). All three are statistically reliable, favourable findings. The substantially larger t-statistic for commercial trust, though, marks it as the more robustly established of the two: political resilience is the comparatively weaker — though still significant — signal, and the gap between them is itself informative about where confidence sits firmest.

The percentages rank the three results the same way. Fifty-four percent agree leadership prioritizes journalism over commercial interests, against 9% who disagree — six to one. Trust regarding political interests is positive but visibly less commanding: 47% to 14%, three to one. Belief that the organisation would withstand outright political pressure narrows further, to 39% against 17% — just over two to one. That steady shrinking ratio, from six-to-one down to roughly two-to-one, is the plain-language reason we call political resilience the weaker signal: confidence is real on every front tested, but it visibly thins as the hypothetical test of leadership gets harder.

4.4 Political and commercial pressure: a real but fragile signal

Political pressure having increased over the past three years sits significantly above neutral, but only just ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.65$, $t(102) = 2.07$, $p = .041$). Commercial pressure ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.57$, $t(102) = 0.59$, $p = .55$) and perceived erosion of internal editorial independence ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.42$, $t(102) = -1.28$, $p = .20$) are statistically indistinguishable from neutral at this sample size. In practice, the survey does not, on its own, provide strong population-level evidence that either of the latter two is currently rising — though absence of confirmation here is not evidence of absence, particularly on questions where respondents at some organisations may have reason to answer carefully.

The percentages show precisely why the last two results miss significance — and offer this report's clearest case for reading percentages and tests together. For political pressure, 39% agree it has increased against 24% who disagree: a real but narrow 1.6-to-1 margin. For commercial pressure the gap nearly closes: 31% agree, 27% disagree. For editorial independence the picture reverses outright — only

20% agree it has decreased, while 32% disagree. A headline of “31% report rising commercial pressure” sounds decisive in isolation; set against the 27% who disagree, the percentages themselves show why the test could not confirm a population-level trend. Where the agree-disagree gap is narrow or reversed, neither the percentage nor the statistic supports a claim of one-directional shift.

Even so, where political pressure is reported as elevated, it tracks closely with perceived loss of editorial independence: the two correlate significantly and moderately ($r = 0.55$, $p < .001$). Notably, neither political nor commercial pressure correlates significantly with trust in leadership on the corresponding dimension (political: $r = -0.13$, $p = .198$; commercial: $r = 0.05$, $p = .593$). That is an encouraging, statistically grounded finding in its own right: it suggests trust in leadership's integrity is not simply a function of the external pressure environment, but is driven substantially by factors within an organisation's own control — internal culture, and how leadership behaves day to day.

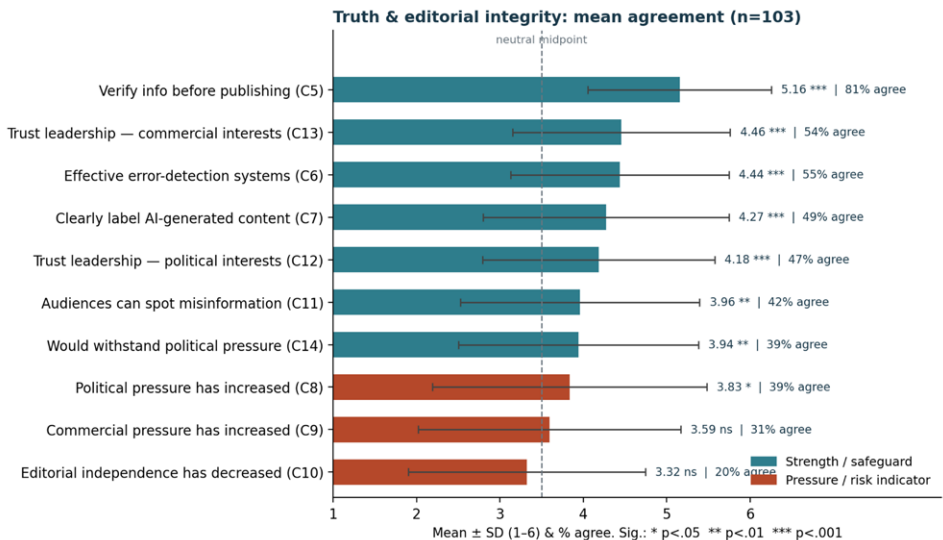


Figure 2. Mean $\pm$ SD agreement with key Truth and editorial-pressure statements (n=103), tested against the scale's neutral midpoint (3.5) with one-sample t-tests. Teal bars indicate safeguards/strengths; rust bars indicate pressure or risk indicators. Significance: $p < .05$, $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$, ns = not significant.

5. Why Mental Health and Editorial Trust Move Together

A central premise of this report is that the mental health of media professionals and the trustworthiness of their journalism are interdependent — not separate workstreams. In other words: newsrooms probably cannot fully protect editorial quality without attending to the wellbeing of the people producing it. The data back this with more than a hunch. They show a statistically significant pattern, not a loose descriptive association that could be explained away.

The Truth Index and Wellbeing Index correlate strongly ($r = 0.63$, $p < .001$, $n = 103$) — among the strongest, most statistically reliable relationships anywhere in this dataset. The pattern extends. The Strategy Index correlates with the Truth Index at $r = 0.67$ ($p < .001$), and the Talent Support Index with the Wellbeing Index at $r = 0.66$ ($p < .001$). Read together,

these three relationships describe one coherent story rather than three coincidences: organisations that invest in clear strategy and staff support tend to be the same organisations sustaining trustworthy journalism. Two boundaries on that claim deserve stating plainly. These are cross-sectional correlations from a single wave, so they cannot establish whether

wellbeing drives trust, trust drives wellbeing, or both reflect a third factor such as overall management quality. And because respondents cluster within organisations and countries, some shared-context effects may inflate the apparent tightness of these relationships. The direction of the story is well supported; its mechanism is not yet.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Truth and Wellbeing are not two separate problems competing for the same budget. The data show they rise and fall together ($r = 0.63$, $p < .001$), so investing in one is, plausibly, investing in both.

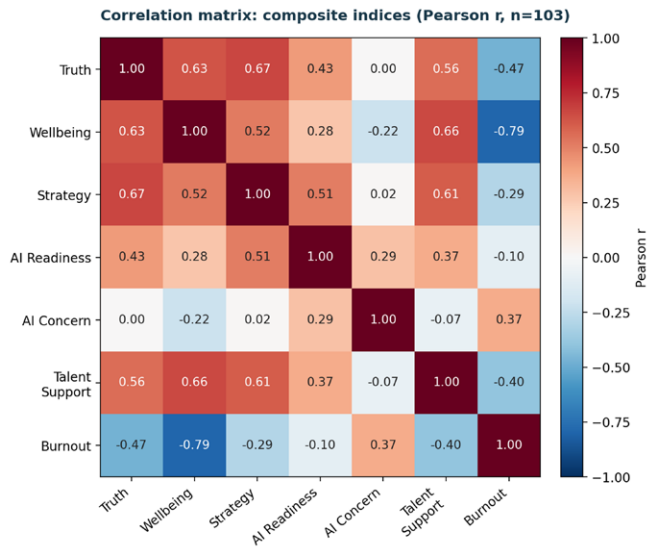


Figure 5. Correlation matrix (Pearson r) across all seven composite indices, $n=103$. Darker red/blue indicates stronger positive/negative association.

One technical note for readers checking the figure above: the Burnout Score is built from five items (D11–D15) that also feed the Wellbeing Index. Because the two measures share underlying questions, the very strong Burnout–Wellbeing correlation visible

in the heatmap ($r = -0.79$) is partly a function of how we constructed the indices, not purely an independent finding. We report it for completeness, not as additional proof on top of the relationships above.

Relationship	r	p	Interpretation
Truth Index ↔ Wellbeing Index	0.63	<.001	Strong: truth and wellbeing move together
Strategy Index ↔ Truth Index	0.67	<.001	Strong: clear strategy underpins editorial integrity
Talent Support ↔ Wellbeing Index	0.66	<.001	Strong: training and pay support wellbeing
Harassment experienced ↔ MH impact	0.73	<.001	Very strong: harassment harm is near-universal when it occurs
Workload sustainability ↔ Burnout	-0.47	<.001	Moderate: sustainable workload protects against burnout
Long hours (>10h/day) ↔ Burnout	0.41	<.001	Moderate: long hours predict burnout
Political pressure ↔ Editorial independence loss	0.55	<.001	Moderate: pressure and independence loss move together
Burnout ↔ Considered leaving journalism	0.44	<.001	Moderate: burnout reliably predicts retention risk
Stress ↔ Considered leaving journalism	0.36	<.001	Moderate, significant
Org takes MH seriously ↔ Burnout	-0.32	=.001	Moderate: protective
MH support access ↔ Considered leaving	0.09	=.358	Not significant
Org harassment policy ↔ MH impact of harassment	-0.18	=.068	Not significant (marginal)
Political pressure ↔ Trust leadership-politics	-0.13	=.198	Not significant
Commercial pressure ↔ Trust leadership-commercial	0.05	=.593	Not significant
AI use ↔ Concerned AI will replace my job	0.00	=1.00	Not significant
AI ethics guidelines ↔ AI misinformation concern	0.14	=.157	Not significant

Table 1. Key correlations identified across composite indices and individual survey items (Pearson r with significance; n=103).

The pattern of which relationships hold and which do not is itself informative. The connections that matter most for the Resilient Journalism argument — truth, wellbeing, strategy, and talent support all moving together, plus harassment's severe mental-health impact — are all strongly confirmed. Several other plausible ideas are not: that AI ethics guidelines reduce misinformation concern, that harassment policy buffers harm, that

external pressure erodes leadership trust. None held up statistically in this sample. That is a useful finding in its own right. It suggests where leaders might focus limited time and budget: on the levers the data actually support, rather than on every idea that merely sounds reasonable — while remembering that a null result here may reflect limited statistical power as much as a genuinely absent effect.

6. Artificial Intelligence in the Newsroom

We treat AI adoption and governance here as a workload and wellbeing issue, not only a technology one. Unmanaged adoption feeds directly into the workload and psychological strain documented in Section 3, particularly where training and ethical guidance lag the pace at which new tools enter daily practice.

Adoption is significantly above neutral on every item tested. Daily use of AI tools ($M = 4.40$, $t(102) = 6.50$, $p < .001$), belief that AI improves work efficiency ($M = 4.67$, $t(102) = 9.52$, $p < .001$), and organisational encouragement of AI use ($M = 4.27$, $p < .001$) are all statistically reliable, strongly positive findings. Belief that AI will create new job opportunities rather than simply displace existing roles is also significantly positive, though more modestly ($M = 3.89$, $t(102) = 2.91$, $p = .004$).

Half of all respondents — 50% — say they use AI tools daily, against 12% who disagree: roughly four to one. A

larger majority, 59%, agree AI helps them work more efficiently, against just 6% who disagree — close to ten to one. Organisational encouragement runs 46% to 11%. These wide, one-sided margins justify describing AI adoption as genuine majority behaviour in this sample, not a minority trend. The new-jobs question is the exception that proves the rule: 32% agree AI will create new opportunities against 18% who disagree — real, but far narrower, which is why we call optimism about new jobs positive but comparatively modest.

Concern is equally robust — and on the most important item, larger than adoption itself. Concern that AI-generated misinformation will damage trust in media is the second-strongest one-sample result in the entire survey ($M = 4.85$, $t(102) = 11.87$, $p < .001$). Concern about losing one's own job to AI within five years, by contrast, sits significantly below neutral ($M = 3.00$,

$t(102) = -3.31, p = .001$). The worry in this sample is about AI's effect on the profession's credibility, not primarily about personal job security.

The percentages draw that distinction sharply. Two in three respondents — 67% — agree AI-generated misinformation will damage trust in media; only 3% disagree, roughly twenty-two to one and the most one-sided split in this section. Personal job-loss concern runs the other way: 17% agree they worry about losing their job to AI within five years, against 48% who disagree — nearly three to one against personal concern. Almost everyone worries about what AI could do to the profession's credibility; most do not worry about what it could do to their own livelihood. The gap between those two percentages is itself the clearest evidence for the conclusion.

The governance gap is the most important finding in this section. Organisational AI ethics guidelines sit

significantly above neutral, but only modestly ($M = 3.93, t(102) = 2.69, p = .008$), while adequacy of AI training does not reach significance ($M = 3.65, p = .317$) and distrust of generative AI output quality is likewise statistically indistinguishable from neutral ($M = 3.61, p = .39$). Set against the strongly elevated misinformation concern above, a clear pattern emerges: **organisations have moved decisively on AI adoption, but have not yet moved as decisively on AI training and ethics infrastructure.**

Consistent with this, AI ethics guidelines do not correlate significantly with reduced misinformation concern ($r = 0.14, p = .157$), and AI usage does not correlate with personal job-loss concern ($r = 0.00, p = 1.00$). Where governance measures exist, in other words, they have not yet visibly moved staff sentiment on either front — though we cannot rule out that they matter in ways a cross-sectional survey does not capture, such as preventing incidents that would otherwise have shifted sentiment for the worse.

KEY FINDING

AI adoption (daily use, efficiency gains) is significantly above neutral on every measure. AI governance (ethics guidelines, training) is not — even as concern about AI-driven misinformation is the second-strongest result in the survey. Adoption has outpaced governance.

The percentages make the governance gap concrete. Forty percent agree their organisation has clear AI ethics guidelines, against 22% who disagree — real, but modest next to the adoption figures. Training adequacy splits exactly

evenly: 26% agree, 26% disagree, which is the plain-language reason the item misses significance. Distrust of generative AI output quality is similarly close: 22% to 18%. None of these governance measures approaches

the lopsided 50–67% majorities on adoption and misinformation concern. That contrast — strong, one-sided percentages on adoption and concern; narrow, near-even percentages on governance — is the clearest justification for this section’s central claim.

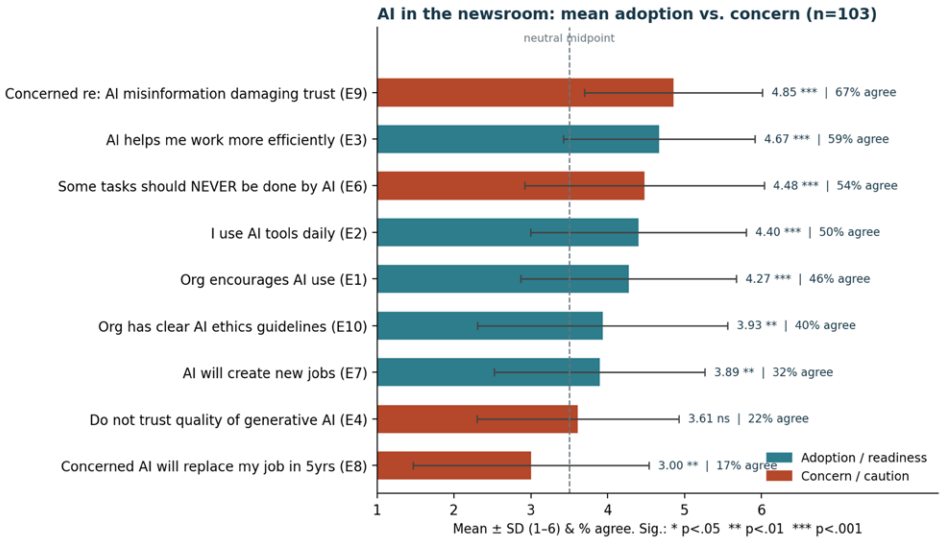


Figure 6. Mean ± SD AI adoption and AI-related concern items (n=103), tested against the neutral midpoint.

7. Talent, Training and Retention

Recruitment and retention difficulty matter for this report as a downstream human cost of the mental-health picture in Section 3: the Burnout Score correlates significantly there with considering leaving the profession ($r = 0.44$, $p < .001$). The figures below should therefore be read partly as a workforce consequence of strain, not only as an operational staffing problem.

Both sides of the talent pipeline show significant strain. Difficulty recruiting experienced journalists ($M = 4.11$, $t(102) = 4.00$, $p < .001$) and difficulty retaining

them ($M = 4.17$, $t(102) = 4.68$, $p < .001$) are among the more strongly confirmed findings in this section, and they point to the same underlying pressure on the workforce.

Forty-four percent agree their organisation struggles to recruit experienced journalists, against 18% who disagree — roughly two and a half to one. Retention is almost identical: 43% to 16%. With well under a fifth of respondents disputing that recruitment and retention are a problem, these rank among the more strongly confirmed findings in the survey, not marginal ones.

Compensation is the clearest statistically confirmed driver behind that pressure. Salary competitiveness against other industries sits significantly below neutral ($M = 3.09$, $t(102) = -2.81$, $p = .006$) — the only item in this section where the average lands significantly on the unfavourable side. Competitiveness against other media organisations does not reach significance ($M = 3.58$, $p = .60$): a genuinely mixed result rather than a confirmed strength.

Only 18% agree salaries are competitive against other industries. More than double that share — 38% — disagree. That two-to-one margin against competitiveness is what singles out compensation as the clearest, most one-sided weakness here. Competitiveness against other media organisations is a different picture

entirely: 27% agree, 27% disagree, an exact tie, which is exactly why we call it genuinely mixed.

Training provision is mixed once tested properly. Digital-skills training sits significantly above neutral ($M = 3.92$, $p = .004$), and professional development is modestly significant ($M = 3.80$, $p = .033$). AI-tools training ($M = 3.72$, $p = .14$) and mentorship for early-career journalists ($M = 3.61$, $p = .43$) are not significant either way. Mental health and wellbeing training — echoing the gap already visible in Section 3 — falls significantly below neutral ($M = 3.17$, $t(102) = -2.25$, $p = .026$). Of all the training types asked about, it is the one organisations appear least likely to be providing well.

The percentages rank these five training types in the same order as the statistics — a useful internal check. Digital-skills training leads at 38% agree to 18% disagree, a clear two-to-one margin. Professional development follows at 27% to 18%. AI-tools training and mentorship sit in the middle (33% to 24% and 28% to 22% respectively), both modest and inconclusive. Mental health and wellbeing training comes last, and it is the only one where disagreement clearly outweighs agreement: 18% agree it is provided well, 37% disagree — more than double. That last, lopsided figure is why we call mental-health training the type organisations are least likely to be providing well, not merely the lowest-scoring item on a list.

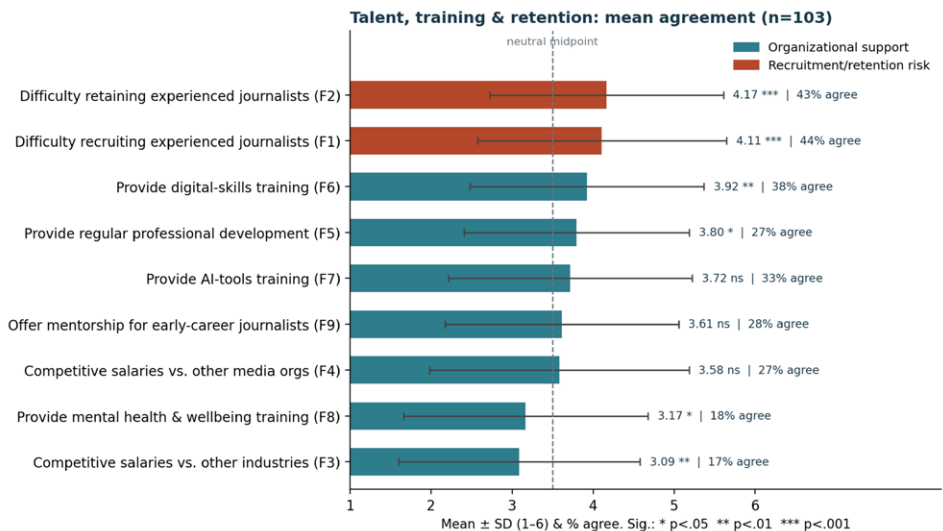


Figure 7. Mean $\pm$ SD organisational support and recruitment/retention risk items (n=103), tested against the neutral midpoint.

Read alongside Section 3, this points to one coherent operational risk rather than several unrelated ones. The same organisations facing significant recruitment and retention difficulty are, on this evidence, significantly under-delivering on the two levers most

directly tied to retention in the data: fair compensation and mental-health training. Broader training adequacy, by comparison, shows only an ambiguous, non-significant picture — neither a strength nor a confirmed weakness.

8. Voices from the Newsroom: Qualitative Themes

Six open-ended questions drew responses from 96–102 of the 103 participants. Because thematic coding of free text produces categorical counts rather than a continuous scale, we report these results as the number of respondents whose answer touched on each theme (out of the total coded for that question), not as percentages of a uniform attitude scale. A response could be coded into more than one theme — and keyword-based coding, even hand-checked, inevitably flattens some nuance in how respondents actually phrased things.

8.1 The biggest challenge facing public media over the next three years

Of 102 coded responses, misinformation and the erosion of public trust dominated (n=25), followed by AI and technology disruption (n=19), political pressure and press freedom (n=17), digital competition and audience relevance (n=17), funding and commercial pressure (n=14), and staff retention (n=9). Several responses explicitly combined themes — linking the spread of misinformation, for instance, directly to the difficulty of retaining public trust while also adapting to AI and shrinking budgets.

8.2 “If you were CEO, what ONE change would you make to improve staff mental health?”

No single fix dominates. Four themes tied at n=10 of 102 responses each: reducing workload, hours, or adjusting staffing levels; flexible leave or dedicated mental-health days; a more open culture that destigmatises mental-health conversations; and structured training on coping with traumatic content. Access to counselling or an Employee Assistance Program followed (n=7), then better pay (n=5). The spread itself is telling: rather than converging on one fix, respondents named several — which suggests wellbeing strain in this sector has multiple causes and probably will not yield to any single policy lever.

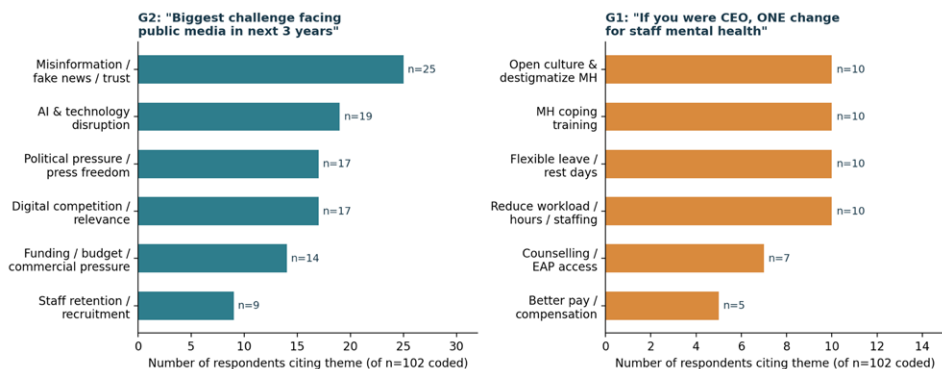


Figure 8. Thematic coding of open-ended responses to G2 (biggest challenge, left) and G1 (one change for staff mental health, right). Bars show the number of respondents whose answer touched on each theme; responses could be coded into more than one theme (n=102 coded for each question).

8.3 Skills, and what audiences want more and less of

Asked what skills journalists will need most in five years, respondents overwhelmingly named AI and digital/technical literacy (n=64 of 102), well ahead of storytelling and communication skills (n=21) and fact-checking, verification, and critical thinking (n=19). Respondents appear to see AI fluency and human editorial judgement as complementary future skills, not competing ones.

Asked what they want more of when consuming news, the leading theme was in-depth analysis, context, and investigative reporting (n=23 of 102), followed by solutions-oriented or constructive journalism (n=12) and balanced, diverse perspectives (n=9). Asked what they want less of, clickbait/sensationalism and political bias/propaganda tied at the top (n=16 each, of 99 coded), followed by misinformation (n=12) and excessive negativity, violence, or conflict coverage (n=10).

8.4 Closing reflections: an unprompted convergence

The final, open “anything else” question (G6) drew substantive answers from most respondents — and a striking number connected the survey’s two central themes, truth and wellbeing, without being prompted to. Representative reflections:

“Stronger support systems and trust-building will define the future of journalism. Newsrooms need to prioritise mental health with manageable workloads, access to counselling, and a healthier work culture. At the same time, public media must rebuild trust by being transparent, independent, and fact-driven.”

“The future of news depends on trust, human judgment, and ethical standards. Technology will accelerate production, but mental resilience and

editorial integrity will define sustainable journalism.”

“I strongly believe that mental health is the most neglected issue among media professionals. We often talk about ethics, editorial guidelines, newsroom organisation, and funding. However, I seldom took part in a meaningful discussion about the mental well-being of journalists.”

That unprompted convergence is itself a notable finding. Practitioners across very different countries and organisations independently linked institutional trust to staff wellbeing without being asked — lending qualitative support, from a different direction, to the statistically confirmed Truth–Wellbeing correlation in Section 5.

9. Key Findings at a Glance

This section gives the headlines in plain language, led by the mental-health findings at this report's core. Full statistical detail and context for each point sits in Sections 3 to 8.

- Pride and sense of contribution are strong and significantly elevated (both $p < .001$; 69% agree on each) — a genuine protective resource. By contrast, several headline strain indicators — stress (30% agree), burnout symptoms (24% agree), long hours (29% agree), weekend work (32% agree) — are statistically average rather than elevated, and a few specific risk items (considering leaving, 10% agree; physical-health impact, 18% agree; anxiety about work, 11% agree) sit significantly below neutral, meaning better than average.
- The wellbeing gaps that are statistically confirmed are specific, not general: trauma-coping training is significantly under-provided ($p = .004$; only 19% agree it is provided), while mental-health service access (34% agree) and anti-harassment policy clarity (29% agree) are both genuinely ambiguous — neither confirmed strength nor confirmed gap.
- Where online harassment occurs, its mental-health impact is severe and overwhelming ($r = 0.73$, $p < .001$, the strongest relationship in the dataset), even though harassment itself is not widespread (only 7% agree they have experienced it; the average response is significantly below neutral).
- A leadership-frontline burnout gap shows up descriptively (senior management report less burnout than middle management or reporters) but does not reach statistical significance ($p = .353$ for the full comparison, $p = .140$ for the two largest groups). Suggestive, not confirmed.
- Truth and Wellbeing move together. The two composite indices correlate at $r = 0.63$ ($p < .001$): organisations that support staff wellbeing also tend to report stronger editorial safeguards, and a relationship this strong is very unlikely to be chance. This is the empirical basis for treating mental health as an editorial-quality issue, not a separate one — with the caveat that a single cross-sectional wave cannot establish which drives which.
- Verification discipline is the single strongest result in the whole survey ($M = 5.16/6$, $p < .001$; 81% agree, 5% disagree), ahead of every other item tested.
- Reliability and audience trust are moving in a genuinely positive direction, as respondents see it. Both “more reliable now” (45% agree) and “trust increased” (48% agree) are significantly elevated, while their opposites (“less reliable,” 15% agree; “trust decreased,” 12% agree) sit significantly below neutral.

- Trust in leadership is real, but uneven. Trust that leadership prioritises journalism over commercial interests is the stronger, more robust signal (54% agree); trust regarding political pressure is also positive and significant, but comparatively weaker (47% agree).
- Reported political pressure is a real but fragile signal ($p=.041$, only just significant; 39% agree); commercial pressure (31% agree) and editorial-independence erosion (20% agree) do not reach significance at this sample size.
- AI adoption is significantly above neutral on every measure (daily use, 50% agree; efficiency gains, 59% agree). AI governance — training adequacy (26% agree) and ethics guidelines (40% agree) — is not as strongly confirmed, even as concern about AI-driven misinformation is significantly elevated (67% agree). Adoption has outpaced governance, with direct workload and wellbeing implications for staff.
- Compensation is the clearest, statistically confirmed driver of recruitment and retention difficulty: salary competitiveness against other industries sits significantly below neutral ($p=.006$; only 18% agree it is competitive), alongside significant recruitment (44% agree it is difficult) and retention difficulty (43% agree, both $p<.001$). Retention difficulty is itself tied statistically to burnout ($r=0.44$, $p<.001$), making this a mental-health consequence as much as an operational one.

10. Recommendations

Because this report centres on mental health, the recommendations below lead in each audience group with the items most directly tied to that evidence, before turning to the editorial-trust, AI-governance, and talent measures the report has shown bear on it. They follow from the statistically confirmed patterns above — not from every plausible idea — and we have ordered them within each group from most strongly evidenced to more exploratory. One general caution applies to all of them: recommendations drawn from a management-heavy, largely public-service sample may need adaptation before they transfer cleanly to commercial newsrooms or early-career-heavy teams.

10.1 For the Industry: ABU and Member Organisations

These recommendations operate at the organisational and sector level: the policies, budgets, and structures only leadership and a regional body like ABU can put in place.

to be the gap), and make structured post-assignment debriefing standard practice after traumatic or disturbing coverage rather than leaving it discretionary.

1. Treat wellbeing investment as an editorial-quality investment, not a separate HR cost. Given the strength of the Truth–Wellbeing correlation ($r=0.63$, $p<.001$), business cases for staff support programmes can legitimately be framed — and resourced — alongside editorial-integrity and trust-building initiatives rather than competing with them for budget. In practice, editorial and HR/wellbeing leadership should share KPIs and report jointly to senior management, rather than operating as separate budget lines that collide at planning time.
2. Prioritise trauma-coping training and clarify mental-health service access specifically, rather than broad 'wellbeing' messaging. These are the two areas where the data show a statistically confirmed shortfall (trauma-coping training, $p=.004$) or genuine ambiguity (mental-health service access, $p=.43$) — unlike stress and burnout, which are not significantly elevated on average and may not need blanket intervention. Concretely: audit whether staff actually know how to access existing EAP or counselling services (awareness, not existence, appears to be the gap), and make structured post-assignment debriefing standard practice after traumatic or disturbing coverage rather than leaving it discretionary.
3. Pair anti-harassment policy with proactive, not only reactive, support. Given the near-total mental-health impact of harassment when it occurs ($r=0.73$, $p<.001$) and the non-significant protective effect of current policy ($r=-0.18$, $p=.068$), organisations should review whether existing policies focus on response after harm rather than prevention. Concrete steps: monitoring tools for coordinated harassment campaigns against staff, a designated rapid-response contact, and a published, time-bound protocol for the first 24 hours after an incident is reported.
4. Close the AI governance gap at the same pace as AI adoption. Every adoption item sits significantly above neutral, while AI training adequacy and ethics-guideline clarity are comparatively weak or non-significant signals — against strongly significant concern about AI-driven misinformation ($p<.001$). ABU member organisations should treat AI ethics policy, audience-facing content labelling, and staff training as a near-term agenda item, ideally with mandatory baseline AI-ethics training preceding, not following, the rollout of new AI tools into editorial workflow.

5. Address compensation as the primary, statistically confirmed retention lever. Salary competitiveness against other industries is the only talent-related item that is both significantly unfavourable and tied to acute recruitment/retention difficulty — a clearer, more specific target than broad training or culture interventions. A regional compensation benchmarking exercise, coordinated through ABU, would let individual broadcasters see where they stand without each commissioning separate market research.
6. Communicate and protect editorial independence safeguards proactively, even though current leadership trust is statistically robust and not significantly eroded by reported pressure. That resilience should not be taken for granted while political pressure — the one pressure item significantly elevated ($p=.041$) — persists. Publishing editorial charters and clear firewalls between ownership or political interests and newsroom decision-making is a low-cost way to reinforce trust that is currently strong but not guaranteed to remain so.
7. Use the qualitative findings as a content and trust-rebuilding agenda. Invest visibly in investigative and analytical journalism (the leading 'more of' theme among respondents themselves), while reviewing internal incentives — traffic targets, social-engagement metrics — that may inadvertently reward the clickbait-style content respondents say they want less of.
8. Establish a regional resource-sharing mechanism for wellbeing and AI governance specifically, leveraging ABU's cross-border convening role. No single member organisation — particularly a smaller broadcaster — can easily build full mental-health support infrastructure or an AI ethics framework alone. A shared toolkit, pooled training cohort, and peer benchmarking dashboard would let smaller broadcasters benefit from the more developed practices already in place at larger members.

10.2 For Practitioners: Journalists, Editors, and Frontline Staff

These recommendations operate at the individual and team level: actions journalists, producers, and middle managers can take themselves, often without waiting for top-down change.

1. Build personal and peer-level routines for processing traumatic content, rather than waiting for formal debriefing to be offered. Organisational debriefing after traumatic events does not reach statistical significance as a confirmed practice ($p=.064$), so practitioners should not assume it will happen automatically. Informally checking in with colleagues after a difficult assignment — even briefly — fills a

real gap the data suggest is not yet reliably covered by policy.

2. Treat pride and sense of purpose as a deliberate resilience resource, not an automatic byproduct. Pride in one's work and sense of societal contribution are the two strongest, most significant findings in the entire wellbeing dataset (both $p < .001$) — genuine protective factors. Team leads can reinforce them intentionally: sharing audience-impact stories, recognising specific pieces of work publicly within the newsroom, and connecting day-to-day tasks back to the story's wider purpose are low-cost practices this evidence directly supports.
3. Document and raise workload and compensation concerns through structured channels — staff surveys, union or association representation, exit interviews — rather than informal complaint alone. Compensation is the only statistically confirmed driver of recruitment/retention difficulty this report identifies ($p = .006$), and data-backed advocacy (citing benchmarks, turnover patterns, or this survey's findings directly) is likely to carry more weight with leadership than anecdote.
4. Build personal AI literacy proactively, rather than waiting for formal training to catch up. Organisational AI-training adequacy does not reach statistical significance ($p = .317$), so many practitioners cannot yet rely on it being provided. Self-directed learning in verification tools, deepfake detection, and prompt literacy — while maintaining the 'some tasks should never be automated' boundary that 54% of respondents themselves endorse — is a practical bridge until organisational training matures.
5. Actively seek out mental-health resources even where their existence feels uncertain. Access to employer-provided mental health services sits at statistical neutral in this sample ($M = 3.63$, $p = .43$): neither confirmed adequate nor confirmed absent. That ambiguity is itself informative — resources may exist but be poorly publicised — so directly asking HR or management about EAP, counselling, or peer-support options may surface help that isn't visible by default.
6. For middle managers specifically: actively check in on team wellbeing rather than relying on staff to self-report. Middle managers and frontline reporters show descriptively (though not yet statistically significantly) higher burnout than senior leadership in this sample. Middle managers sit closest to both groups and are well placed to surface frontline strain that senior leadership's own, more favourable self-assessment may not capture.
7. Engage in cross-border peer networks, including those ABU itself convenes, to exchange coping strategies, verification techniques, and trauma-resilience practices. This survey finds similar pressures — AI

disruption, political pressure, burnout — recurring across very different countries and organisations, so peer learning across borders may surface practical solutions not visible from within one's own newsroom or national context.

8. Practice and publicise transparent verification habits directly with audiences — for example, by briefly noting how a story was checked. This was a leading theme in respondents' own 'want more of' answers (Section 8.3), and it reinforces the single strongest, most statistically robust finding in the entire survey: consistent verification is already a genuine strength ($M=5.16/6$, $p<.001$) worth making visible to the audiences whose trust it is meant to earn.

11. Limitations

Every finding in this report should be read against the following boundaries — several of which we have flagged inline where they bite hardest.

- Sample composition: the sample skews toward management (50% middle/senior management) and veteran staff (69% with 11+ years' experience), and 70% work for public-service broadcasters. The findings may under-represent early-career, frontline, and commercial-sector perspectives.
- Statistical power for subgroup comparisons is limited: several role categories have small n (digital/social media specialists, $n=3$, for example), which is the likely reason the descriptively visible role-based burnout gap misses statistical significance. Non-significant results in this report mean 'not statistically confirmed at this sample size' — not definitive evidence of no difference.
- Uneven country representation: respondents span 25 countries/territories, but country-level samples range from 1 to 20 (Malaysia $n=20$ versus several countries at $n=1-2$). We therefore did not attempt country-by-country or regional-cluster comparisons; they would not have been statistically reliable.
- Multiple comparisons: with 75 items tested individually via one-sample t -tests, some results significant at $p<.05$ would be expected by chance alone (roughly 3–4 of 75 at a 5% false-positive rate). Results at $p<.01$ or $p<.001$ — the majority of significant findings reported here — are markedly more robust to this concern, and the report's most consequential claims rest on those stronger thresholds or on composite indices rather than single items.

- Index reliability: six of the seven composite indices show acceptable-to-excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71\text{--}0.93$; Section 2.2). The AI Concern Index does not ($\alpha = 0.17$) and should be treated as a noisy, multi-dimensional composite rather than a single coherent attitude; every finding involving it (Sections 3.3, 6) carries that caveat and would benefit from item-level re-analysis in future work.
 - Self-report and retrospective recall: items about change 'over the past three years' or 'past 12 months' rely on respondents' subjective recall rather than independent verification.
 - Social desirability and sensitivity bias: items concerning political pressure and editorial independence may attract under- or over-reporting, particularly from respondents at state-owned or government-funded broadcasters.
 - Cross-sectional design and shared-item indices: all relationships reported are correlational, not causal. The Burnout Score and Wellbeing Index share underlying items (Section 5), so their strong correlation is partly definitional; we flag this wherever it occurs, and it does not affect the other composite-index relationships, which are built from non-overlapping item sets.
 - Thematic coding of open-ended responses used keyword-based categorisation validated by manual review; nuanced or multi-themed responses were coded into more than one category, so theme counts do not sum to the total number of respondents.
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Mosiqi Acharya

Managing Editor,
Asia Pacific
ABC News
Australian Broadcasting
Corporation (ABC)

Mosiqi is an editorial leader with more than two decades of experience in television, radio and digital journalism across Australia and Asia. She currently leads a multilingual newsroom at the ABC, overseeing a team of more than 60 journalists and producers across the Asia Pacific. She began her career in India during a period of significant political and social change, reporting on major national events, investigations and crises. These days, her work at ABC News as the Managing Editor of the Asia Pacific Newsroom, focuses on editorial leadership and cross-platform journalism across the region.

BUILDING RESILIENT MEDIA PEOPLE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

It was July 2006. I had just returned to work after taking a couple of days off for my engagement. I was back in the newsroom at CNN-IBN (now Network18), still riding the high of the engagement and was wrapping up my shift, when news came through that a bomb had exploded on a Mumbai local train.

It was July 11.

At first, none of us realised we were witnessing one of India's deadliest terrorist attacks. But within minutes, we learnt these were multiple, coordinated attacks. Bombs had exploded at various locations on Mumbai's western suburban train line. Concealed in pressure cookers, placed in first-class train compartments, these seven explosions were carefully timed to coincide with the evening rush hour and maximise devastation.

I was immediately assigned to go to Matunga station with my camera person.

Nothing prepares you for the moment you arrive.

I witnessed one of the most horrific sights of my life. There was utter panic, chaos and confusion. The blast had ripped apart a train carriage and thrown people onto tracks. I saw survivors covered in blood, many in shock, stumble through the tracks to eventually just collapse until help arrived.

But amid the horror, I witnessed something else.

Passengers who had escaped injuries from other compartments rushed back towards the wreckage instead of away from it. People used shirts and dupattas as makeshift bandages. Residents from surrounding apartments overlooking the tracks threw down bedsheets from their balconies so injured could be carried to taxis, rickshaws and cars. Before the emergency crews could fully respond, ordinary people had already become first responders.

That is the Mumbai I remember.

From Matunga, I made my way to Sion hospital where the place was overflowing.

Doctors, nurses and hospital staff were scrambling to help patients as more casualties kept arriving. I found a corner to absorb it all when I noticed a tall woman standing a few steps behind me. Clutching her mangalsutra tightly, I could hear she was repeatedly chanting a prayer.

I introduced myself and gently asked whether she was looking for someone... and she whispered, 'my husband', in between her chanting.

For the next hour, I intermittently watched her make inquiries, perhaps preparing herself for the worse but eventually, she found him.

He was injured but he was alive.

I still remember how I felt a huge relief.

Less than a week earlier, I had gotten engaged to my long-time boyfriend. We weren't even married yet but watching that woman search desperately for her husband struck something deep inside me. I couldn't stop thinking how terrified she would have been, the agonising wait between hope and fear and not knowing whether he was alive.

The first few hours of the Mumbai train bombings have never left me.

I have shared this story with my family, friends and some young colleagues starting their careers. Twenty years on, I can still picture the train tracks, the hospital lobby and that woman clutching her mangalsutra.

July 2006 was defining in many ways. It started with a promise of a bright future that I looked forward to spending with my partner and the blasts also reminded me how fragile that future could be.

As journalists, we are often taught to 'get to the story fast', verify information and tell stories accurately. We are trained to remain calm under pressure and be objective even when faced with human suffering.

What we are rarely taught, or at least I wasn't, was what those stories do to us.

Much later, after I moved to Australia, I learnt about 'vicarious trauma'. In simple terms, it is the emotional impact of witnessing people's loss, suffering and grief. I have personally found that there's no definite start or a stop to it. It is something you cannot forget, cannot stop replaying.

We don't have to be direct victims to be changed by it.

Like doctors, nurses, emergency workers, we spend our careers stepping into other people's worst days. We are assigned the inglorious task of asking questions in these moments and we learn to do it emphatically. We witness grief before families have had time to process it themselves. We absorb stories of violence, disaster, displacement, loss so that the rest of our society can understand what happened.

Journalists are one of the most resilient people I know. But I feel this resilience is often misunderstood. And I feel it is important to point out what is NOT resilience.

Resilience is not being unaffected by what you witness. It is not pretending the stories don't hurt or wearing the exhaustion of it as a badge of honour. The work leaves a mark. It fundamentally changes you as a human. And yet, you find ways to keep doing it without losing yourself in the process.

I have lost the count of stories I have reported where I have interviewed grieving families and listened to stories that have broken my heart. Some have stayed with me for days and some others, for years.

I have learnt resilience isn't something you have or you don't. It is something you gradually build.

I have found talking to family, friends, colleagues after challenging assignment helps because they understand the emotional toll of journalism.

At times, I have let myself cry in the newsroom. In recent years, watching things unfold the way they have, has tested me emotionally.

Becoming a newsroom leader has taught me that it's not just me that I need to look after. Looking after journalists, especially those who are covering some of the world's most complex stories, reporting on conflict, climate, natural disasters, humanitarian crises, has become one of my top priorities. These reporters, especially in the Asia Pacific, are often members of the very communities they are reporting. It is foolish to expect them to be detached observers. And that's why I strongly feel, supporting them is not just a wellbeing issue but an editorial one.

The stronger our people, the stronger our journalism becomes.

I often find myself thinking about the tall woman in Sion hospital.

She reminds me why I became a journalist in the first place. Journalism has given me a front row seat to witness humanity at its worst but also at its very best.

I salute my colleagues who have displayed incredible courage while reporting some of the most extraordinary stories of our time. The emotional cost of bearing witness to how the world is changing around us is often invisible, but it is real.

If there's one thing I hope newsroom leaders take away from this, it's that our responsibility doesn't end when the story is published or broadcast. Just as we invest in technology, audience strategies and innovative ways of telling stories, we need to invest in people telling them.

If you want your journalists to absorb the unimaginable and return the next day to do it all over again, you will need to find ways to support these people where difficult conversations are welcomed and where we make time to listen to their stories. They are the heart of our newsroom. Looking after them isn't just good leadership, it's absolutely essential to the future of journalism.

“Resilience isn’t something you have or you don’t. It is something you gradually build.”



Tia Soakai

Regional Content Manager
Pasifika TV
PCBL New Zealand

Tia is the Regional Content Manager at Pacific Cooperation Broadcasting Limited (PCBL), where she plays a role in content strategy and distribution across the Pasifika TV network, connecting over 30 broadcasters throughout the Pacific. With more than a decade of experience in sports and cultural broadcasting, she specialises in regional collaboration, capacity building, and digital transformation. She is passionate about story sovereignty and strengthening Pacific voices.

RESILIENT BY NATURE: CARRYING STORIES & SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN PACIFIC MEDIA

Across the Pacific, media practitioners work at the intersection of culture, community, and constant demand. In a region defined by connection rather than distance, resilience is a collective strength grounded in relationships, culture, faith, and shared responsibility.

In our Blue Pacific Continent, we do not just tell stories; we carry them.

We hold the voices of our communities, the weight of our cultures, and the responsibility of representing our people with dignity and truth. Across our Moana, media practitioners operate in environments that are both deeply meaningful and highly demanding. Small teams, limited resources, and vast geographic distances mean that one person is often a producer, camera operator, editor, and journalist all at once. In this reality, resilience is not optional; it is essential.

But for us, resilience is not simply about endurance. It is about connection, culture, faith, and our people.

The modern media landscape is relentless. Today's "always-on" cycle leaves little room to pause and breathe. For Pacific broadcasters, these pressures are amplified. Crews often cover events, file for broadcast, produce digital content, and coordinate regionally, all within the same day.

At the same time, our journalists report within their own communities. The people in the story are often those they know, family members, neighbours, or friends. This proximity deepens the emotional weight of the work.

Yet within this pressure lies strength.

Pacific media practitioners are highly innovative. If we do not have the resources, we create them; rigging a microphone to a broomstick, adapting, and making things work.

Because our story must be told.

Our people are driven by passion, because our stories are never simple. They are layered, like the roots of a banyan tree. We gather to openly share, listen, and unpack knowledge together through *Talanoa* (open dialogue), often seated on the *Fala* (woven mat), around the *Tanoa* (*kava bowl*), bringing stories to life.

Each layer reveals deeper meaning, reminding us that we do not just produce content, we carry meaning.

We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors and the media pioneers who came before us. Yet too often, the Pacific is reduced to stereotypes; simplified and misunderstood. In doing so, we risk forgetting who we truly are.

Our ancestors were master navigators, following the stars across the great Moana to settle the islands we now

call home. They were astronomers, mathematicians, warriors, and master orators, carrying knowledge across generations. That legacy lives on in us, shaping how we know our worth and carry it in every story we tell.

In many global discussions, resilience is framed as an individual responsibility; the ability to cope, adapt, and recover. In the Pacific, we understand it differently.

Resilience is relational. It is grounded in values such as *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *tauhi vā* (nurturing relationships), *loto toa* (courage), *whakapono* (integrity), and *vanua* (connection to land, people, and identity). These are upheld by *mana*; the dignity of serving with purpose.

For us, culture and faith are central to how resilience is lived and sustained. Faith is not separate from our work; it is woven into it. Prayer and reflection provide strength in moments of pressure, grief, and uncertainty.





Our cultural practices guide how we show up for one another. Respect, humility, and collective care are not policies but lived practices. These moments anchor Pacific media practitioners and bring us back to purpose.

At PCBL, resilience is strengthened through regional collaboration. Through Pasifika TV and PacHUB, Pacific content is shared across more than 30 broadcasters throughout the region. This reduces the burden on individual organisations and ensures no one works in isolation. Stories and workloads shared and support is always within reach.

At the same time, our media industry is not always well resourced. We continue to see talented individuals leave our shores in search of greater opportunities.

Yet what holds us together is something deeper, our values, our connectedness, and our shared sense of purpose. By embracing true Pacific values, we see it reflected in our work; in the quality of our stories, in our collaboration, and in the pride we take in what we produce.

Resilience is also operational. When teams are trained and supported by clear systems, they are better equipped to manage pressure. Across the region, this includes outside broadcast and remote production training, mobile journalism, and standardised workflows that enable agile, multi-platform storytelling.

This is further strengthened through the deployment of Disaster Response REMI kits. Built for mobility and resilience, these kits enable broadcasters to continue telling stories even in the most challenging

conditions; from remote islands to disaster-affected communities.

In moments when information becomes critical, they ensure our voices remain present, connected, and responsive.

These systems reduce uncertainty and build confidence. When our people know what to do and how to do it, pressure becomes manageable.

At PCBL, this commitment is formalised through the Pasifika TV Event Coverage Handbook; a regional guide that embeds health, safety, wellbeing, and professional standards into everyday workflows. It includes risk assessments, field safety protocols, emergency response planning, and crew wellbeing practices.

It recognises that in high-pressure or disaster contexts, media teams are not just storytellers, they are part of the region's information lifeline.

It also establishes a strong ethical foundation, recognising that journalists often report on people they know, sometimes relatives. Knowing when to "tap out" is not a weakness, but a sign of integrity. It protects both the journalist and the story.

Economic realities can also create challenges, where gifts or monetary offers may blur professional boundaries. Navigating these moments requires clarity and strong ethical grounding.

Resilience is relational. It is grounded in values such as fa'aaloalo (respect), tauhi vā (nurturing relationships), loto toa (courage), whakapono (integrity), and vanua (connection to land, people, and identity). These are upheld by mana; the dignity of serving with purpose.

The handbook provides that clarity, ensuring care, accountability, and respect are built into how we work. It reinforces a simple principle: humanity first, accuracy over speed.

Alongside this, everyday practices such as debriefs, clear planning, and cultural and spiritual grounding create environments where people feel supported and valued.

At the same time, the digital era has blurred the line between work and rest. Constant connectivity can quickly lead to burnout. Sustainable performance requires systems that allow our people to rest, not just deliver.



Importantly, this guide does not replace Pacific media practitioners' editorial judgement or local knowledge. Instead, it supports, strengthens, and enables Pacific stories to travel beyond our borders without losing their roots.

As we look to the future, we are building our waka, a digital media platform designed to carry Pacific stories to the world.

This waka represents more than technology. It reflects how we move as a region, connected, intentional, and guided by shared purpose. Like traditional voyaging, it depends on a strong crew.

That crew is our Pacific media people.

Their wellbeing, capability, and resilience will determine how far this waka can travel and how safely it carries our stories forward.

In the Pacific, storytelling is not just a profession. It is a responsibility.

When our media practitioners are supported, they tell stories with clarity, compassion, and strength. When they are overwhelmed, both people and stories are affected.

Resilience is about creating systems, cultures, and relationships that allow our people to thrive.

Because when we support our people, we strengthen our stories.

And when our stories are strong, our region is strong.

Kia Kaha!



A. Boldsaikhan

Head of the Political & News
Department
TV5 Mongolia

A. Boldsaikhan has worked as a journalist since 2006. He has nearly 20 years of experience, primarily covering politics and social issues. He is a member of the Mongolian Television Association and the Confederation of Mongolian Journalists, which awarded him the title of Best Editor-in-Chief of Mongolia in 2020. Through his reporting, he has exposed shortcomings in government policy, including the poisoning of thousands due to mercury and sodium cyanide leakage, the controversial law targeting cattle thieves, and the disappearance of an Emergency Services helicopter.

CONVICTED JOURNALISM

In a district of the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar, 15-year-old twin girls live with their 8-year-old brother. They have no parents or anyone to look after them. To survive in Mongolia's ger districts, they burn coal to heat their home. However, coal is only sold to adults, so the three children cannot purchase it themselves. They have endured three winters in a cold house on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, where temperatures can drop to -30°C.

The Mongolian government provides each child with 100,000 Tugriks (approximately US\$25) per month, which helps them survive. The ger they live in was provided through international aid. However, the government agency that supplied it has demanded its return, placing them in a difficult situation.

A journalist from TV5 prepared and aired a report about the three children, shocking the public. People began asking: Why is no one taking care of them? Why is no one speaking about children's rights? Where are the organisations that receive over US\$1 million annually from the state for child protection? What are the government, local authorities, police, and ministries doing?

These questions spread throughout society, and public criticism of the authorities intensified.

As social media began demanding stronger measures to protect children, our editorial team, in cooperation with the police and law enforcement agencies, placed the children under protection. Within two days, thousands of citizens came forward with donations, food, clothing, and money.

To protect the minors, we refused to disclose their address. Instead, we established a system that allows people to send aid through the police under supervision. After 14 days, donations reached US\$30,000. With this support, the children now have a house with land, and about US\$6,000 has been deposited into their accounts. Our mission was completed.

As a well-known Mongolian journalist once said, "To become a journalist, you must first be a human being." This inspired us, and we were proud to help these children.

Soon after, the government held a meeting regarding the child rights issues we raised and began discussing legal reforms. Ministries issued statements warning subordinate organisations to protect children's rights and punish negligence.

However, one morning, our editorial office received a phone call.

"Hello?"

"Yes, this is the district child protection organisation. A case has been filed

against your editorial office. You interviewed children without our permission and helped them."

"Sorry, but there was no one to care for those children. Because of our report, your organisation finally took action."

"That may be true, but a case will still be filed. You will be fined US\$1,500."

"What does this mean? The entire community helped those children. We exposed serious violations of children's rights. The police are aware of this."

"That doesn't matter. Your organisation will be fined. You should not have helped the children. You must come and give a statement."

The call ended.

Why were they saying this? What had we done wrong?

After internal discussion, we reached a conclusion. The state organisation that had failed in its duty to protect children began scrutinising our work, documenting minor flaws, and preparing to fine us. Why? Because our report directly criticised their failure.

It became clear that officials, angered by the criticism, intended to punish us under the guise of the law. While they occupied comfortable offices funded by taxpayers, children were left freezing, hungry, and neglected.

Their actions went further. They repeatedly summoned the three children to their office during the harsh winter, causing unnecessary hardship. They recorded statements the children did not make. They pressured journalists to delete published materials, treated them disrespectfully during questioning, and omitted key details from official records.

They attempted to silence a media organisation through intimidation, using state authority. It was evident they were more concerned with protecting their reputation than safeguarding children's rights.

In the end, after imposing the fine, our editorial office was labelled as having violated children's rights, while the officials appeared to have fulfilled their duties.

This reflects the reality of organisations claiming to protect children in Mongolia. Unofficial data suggests that over a thousand children become victims of crime each year. Children continue to die, suffer abuse, and face severe neglect. Cases like the three children we reported on are not uncommon.

This incident also highlights the state of press freedom in Mongolia. Conflicts between media and authorities persist. Journalists face detention, investigation, fines, and pressure to remain silent.



“To become a journalist, you must first be a human being.”

Despite this, our editorial team will not stop. We will continue to protect journalism and publish critical reporting. Today more than ever, journalists must possess strong legal knowledge. They are expected not only to report, but also to think like investigators, lawyers, and advocates.



Chevaan Daniel
Group Director
Capital Maharaja Group
MTV Sri Lanka

Chevaan leads the Maharaja Media Network, Sri Lanka's largest private media network, spanning television, radio, digital, music and movies. His career has spanned three decades of solid journalism from his time at NBC in New York to guiding his media network through civil wars, tsunamis, political revolutions and economic meltdowns always playing a central role in shaping one of South Asia's most influential independent media organisations. He is an Eisenhower Global Fellow, a Fulbright scholar, an Asia 21 Fellow, and sits on the Global Advisory Board of Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs in the US.

THE WORLD IS CRYING OUT FOR LEADERSHIP. HOW WILL WE ANSWER THAT CALL?

What is Modern Journalism?

It seems to me that journalism today, is afraid of its own shadow. As journalists, we have never had this much power at our fingertips. But here we are - surrounded by fractured nations, despotic leadership, fragile democracies & defenceless communities.

Instead of recognising a powerful opportunity to go beyond reporting, we are perhaps collectively responsible for being unwilling to reimagine journalism as a function of global leadership. Instead, what we see happening on most global stages and discussions, is the rhetorical plugging of an increasingly irrelevant role, into a maddeningly unhinged future. When the world is crying out for **LEADERSHIP**, have we prepared enough to answer that call? Some may say, yes we have - by speaking truth to power. But what if modern journalism, is that power?

The question is, what might that power look like? What structure might it evolve into? Can we imagine a future where journalism goes beyond reporting on poverty, but also helps solve it at the grassroots? Can we imagine a future where journalism creates the forums for geopolitical dialogue but also plays a central role in shepherding nations, flashpoints and

conflicts towards more meaningful resolution? To many this may seem completely outrageous; news should never become the story. But that's exactly the argument. I believe it does. Almost no other profession wields as much power and shoulders as much trust, as journalism does. And this makes a recalibration of the responsibility of journalism critical to our times.

The evolution of trust

This is a difficult landscape to traverse. The ideas are complex as is the future. But to appreciate the true scope of the future of journalism, we must be willing to push through the barriers of convention and expand the boundaries of the fourth estate, invading the space occupied by the fifth. Journalism does not rest on platforms, institutions or technologies. Its spine is the oldest human architecture of all: **TRUST**.

To turn to someone you trust, is human nature. It is both instinctual and acquired. A thoroughly conscious choice based on an evolutionary need: to depend on. But why is trust the foundational philosophy of what is clearly a war that's been fought on technological terrain?

The first point of order is then to question every presumption and presupposition about journalism and to be Socratic about it. We may find, and I know I did, that the more we ask *what and why*, and most importantly, *why not*, we end up running out of excuses as to why we (journalists) must remain on the sidelines of global opportunity. To scrutinise our own dogmas and then

emerge as something distinctive and new, armed with metamorphized ideas that *create the future*.

The bond of trust is what keeps the complicated mechanics of human societies working in order. Human societies figured out ways in which large numbers of people can remain aligned so that complicated, integrated communities can thrive. It was impossible for person-to-person communication to work beyond a certain critical mass. This is where symbolism became part of the human story. Symbolism represented faith, hope and perhaps most importantly, trust.

Prosperity for large numbers of people depended on people trusting their leaders. Governance structures that emerged understood that trust was a very individual condition, but it was impossible to communicate it individually. This made religion an inevitable political solution. But today, we are faced with a crisis of trust across all spheres of society. Human societies align themselves and make decisions based on information

they have access to and can trust. But a failure of trustworthy, responsible information and a failure to understand the value of intellectual discernment on the part of the individual, has meant that a space that must be solidly occupied by the weight of competing ideas founded on the objective truth, has been overrun by wildly meaningless opinions, podcasts and fallacies. A languid Fifth Estate, sailing listlessly and dangerously into the future.

But what of the truth?

It is the truth, that guards the foundation upon which all of society is built on. Political decay is easier to understand. The signs of a collapsing democracy are not difficult to recognise. But what precipitates this erosion? Trust may exist, but if it is misplaced and misused, it will eventually lead to a social contract that is torn apart in public. The kernel of these collapses can often be sourced all the way down to a collapse in the way in which the truth was mishandled by the institutes that hold public trust.

"If trust is the ultimate arbiter of human society, then truth becomes its cornerstone".

Journalism is not a responsibility that sits on the sidelines of this contemporary human arrangement, but rather, it lives in the eye of the storm. Modern Journalism. It is vital to understand this responsibility as we take time to understand the utterly confounding complexities that have taken root in modern societies. At a time when journalists should and must

emerge as the absolute guardians of the very core of an entire human value system, we seem to be falling short, attracted by the dazzling lights of AI and ubiquitous digital platforms. This is not an indictment on AI. But AI must be understood, appreciated and used for what it is: a brilliantly designed system that is also, still enormously empty. Empty of human wisdom, human experience, human culture and natural history. Not even a fraction of all of the books ever written, in the thousands of languages and dialects humans have organised themselves around, are captured by AI.

"We are in a euphoric AI spiral that we are too caught up in to recognise".

AI can do amazing things. AI will change the course of human history. But only if we infuse the guardrails that will protect the human mind and spirit, and only if we find it in us to continue to push the domains of human knowledge forward and into the future. The miraculous salad that AI is able to create for us today, is ultimately the

result of gargantuan processing power regurgitating information that already exists.

"If we are to abdicate the opportunity to drive human progress to AI, then this discussion is redundant. But if we are to understand the criticality of the role a journalist plays in modern society, and the importance of defending the truth and the bond of trust that has built civilisations and has been favoured by evolution, then we must be also willing to shift our minds to a new plane".

Journalists are not platforms

Trust must be understood before it is defended. Trust takes ownership. Trust takes stewardship. Trust gives leadership. The lines that separate what modern journalism ought to be, and what political leadership is, are blurring. Politicians make incursions into journalism all the time, when there is weak ethical, moral or even philosophical basis to do so. But as journalists we are often happy and even proud to relegate ourselves to that important corner of society where we simply function as platforms. Fearless platforms, no doubt. Platforms for debate. Platforms for opinion. Platforms for information. Platforms against injustice. A voice for the voiceless. Journalists are not platforms.

The realm of modern journalism must expand to where society requires it. The weapon of choice in this expansion must be the objective truth, mined out of the petabytes of information being force-fed to human beings who are, truth be told,

still waking up from the hangover of having to ride a horse to get a message from one point to another just over a century and a half ago.

Journalism today is a deal with the truth in the most severe and responsible manner imaginable. Sometimes, even the truth delivered too quickly or in an irresponsible way can prove to be counterproductive.

"This is why trust is guarded by ownership, stewardship and leadership. Journalism must take ownership for what is delivered, it must create the conducive environment for it to be accepted, and it must then create the future in which that objective truth benefits society".

Today trust is a verb. Trust must be actively looked for, constantly assessed and relentlessly tested. Consuming reams of completely irrelevant information is dulling our judgment, of

which the repercussions will be seen in time to come. The erosion of and apathy towards trust is pulling down society by tearing down the bonds of community we have built throughout human civilisation. And by breaking down these bonds, we will create islands of isolation that are easily manipulated and exploited.

We must bring back trust, and in this battle, journalism must be on the offence.

People turn to those they trust when they need help, guidance and direction. And Sri Lanka, where I come from, has seen the results of both irresponsible journalism and the irresponsible consumption of that journalism. The result has always been anarchy, and collapse. But it's important to remember that in this same example, it was also journalism that aligned a nation and led its people to take back their country. It was journalism that stepped out of its traditional peripheries and feared nothing in its pursuit of justice. This is why the safeguarding of truth in journalism, and the forging of resilient journalists, must now be understood as central to the future of humanity itself.

Journalism can no longer remain a profession that trails behind events, recording the fractures of the world after they have occurred. It must move to the frontlines of human progress, where truth is defended before it is buried, where trust is rebuilt before it is lost, and where society is given the moral clarity to recognise itself before collapse becomes inevitable.



**Tri Febriana Endah
Sari Wijaya**

Head of TVRI World news
production team
TVRI Indonesia

Tri previously led the news website content team within the New Media Content division at TVRI, where she also served as a reporter and national news producer. She has worked as a journalist since 2007, marking 19 years in the industry this year.

CHALLENGES OF JOURNALISTS IN THE ERA OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE

Over the course of my career, I have experienced various trends in news presentation, beginning with data research conducted using printed newspapers and continuing through the peak of television news. This period was marked by the emergence of numerous private television stations, each with dedicated news divisions that dominated the media landscape between approximately 2008 and 2019. Around 2015, however, news portals and online media websites began to proliferate, gradually reshaping the journalism industry.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, government policies required citizens to remain at home to prevent the spread of the virus. Consequently, most activities were conducted from home, and television and social media became primary sources of information. At the same time, content creators began to emerge rapidly across Indonesia. The flow of information consumption subsequently shifted. Audiences who had previously relied on television broadcasts and news websites became increasingly dependent on smartphones, including the wide range of social media applications that expanded significantly during and after the pandemic.

The era of information dissemination has therefore transformed. Social media now dominates many aspects of public communication, including viewing habits, as audiences increasingly shift from conventional television to digital platforms. This

transition presents a new challenge for traditional television media, which must adapt by optimising social media platforms to maintain audience engagement.

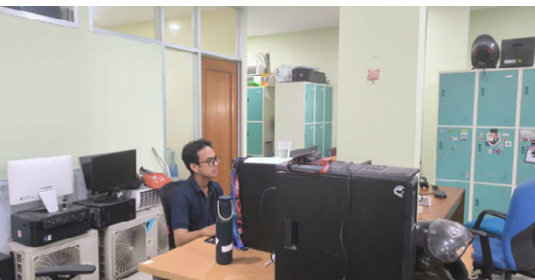
Media convergence from conventional television to social media represents an unavoidable challenge for contemporary media organisations. Whether welcomed or not, adaptation is essential. Media institutions that fail to adjust to these changes risk collapse during the transition process.

In Indonesia, at least 30 local television stations and 60 regional radio stations have ceased operations since 2022 due to pressures from digital disruption. Major television networks have also faced crises. One news television outlet, iNews, closed several offices and conducted mass layoffs in April 2025. Kompas TV and several other stations implemented similar measures, including layoffs and bureau closures, due to declining revenue. Even Net TV, which once dominated conventional television entertainment content, ultimately ceased operations.

Data indicate that national television audiences are declining by approximately 7% annually. Other data show a sharp decrease in television consumption between 2018 and 2023, as audiences increasingly prefer platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and other social media. This shift has also affected advertising patterns. Advertising revenue for conventional television declined by up to 34% following the COVID-19 pandemic, as advertisers migrated to digital media perceived as more effective. Consequently, the workforce has been significantly affected, with approximately 23,000 conventional media workers reported to be at risk of losing their jobs as of November 2024.

For television media organisations that continue to operate, adaptation to digital platforms is not the only requirement. Employees are increasingly expected to master multiple roles due to workforce reductions implemented in the name of efficiency. At the same time, journalists in Indonesia face multitasking demands while receiving relatively low salaries. Many journalists earn below Rp4 million (approximately US\$250) per month, and some receive less than Rp1 million (approximately US\$63).

Journalism continues to exist, although journalists are now required to work across multiple platforms simultaneously. This situation inevitably increases workload and professional demands. In terms of stress and





anxiety levels, Indonesian journalists frequently experience pressure from tight deadlines, newsroom demands, and expectations from media owners. These conditions contribute to fatigue and burnout, particularly as time available for personal needs outside work continues to decrease.

Data from a local case study at a media company in Semarang, Central Java, indicate that 10 out of 15 journalists reported work-related stress caused by excessive workloads. The stress and anxiety faced by journalists today stem not only from workload demands but also from the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism. One perceived impact is the disruption of journalistic roles. The Press Council recorded approximately 1,200 media employees, including journalists, affected by layoffs between 2023 and

mid-2025. Furthermore, the use of AI tools such as Google Search Overview has contributed to a decline in news website traffic of up to 25% in 2025. In principle, however, AI should function as a supportive tool for journalists, particularly in conducting fact-checking and verifying information prior to publication.

Although some observers argue that journalism in Indonesia is “declining,” journalism must not disappear; rather, it must evolve. Journalism remains the foundation of credible and trustworthy information. The press continues to function as the fourth pillar of democracy. Uncontrolled domination of information, by contrast, has the potential to undermine democratic systems. Therefore, maintaining strong, credible journalism remains essential for the sustainability of democracy.



Kati Bremme

Editor-in-Chief, Meta-Media,
France Télévisions

Kati brings two decades of expertise in digital transformation within the broadcasting sector. Her foundation in the arts and humanities, complemented by experience in marketing, publishing and television production, underpins her current focus on artificial intelligence and its strategic deployment in media. She has navigated both broadcast and digital domains, and now operates at the intersection of television, radio and digital media, recognising their convergent influence on contemporary public life. As Head of Innovation at France Télévisions, the French national public broadcaster, she leads initiatives at the forefront of technological change. She also serves as editor-in-chief of Méta-Media, a collaborative platform dedicated to interrogating the future of journalism and advancing media literacy.

THE JOURNALIST WHO CAN STILL BE HURT

Journalism now appears to recruit from among the wounded. At this year's International Journalism Festival in Perugia, an investor was asked what he seeks before supporting a new media venture. Not the business model, but the founder's wound: what broke you, and what did you construct from the ruins? The criterion is unsettling, yet it is borne out by the evidence. Carole Cadwalladr, after four years in the courts over her Cambridge Analytica reporting, channelled that ordeal into founding The Nerve, grounded in the belief that journalism must safeguard its practitioners. The most resilient media ventures often originate with those who have already endured loss.

This reality should concern us more than it flatters. To admire the wounded is easier than to interrogate the causes of their wounds. The traditional peril of journalism was exposure: the indelible images witnessed by correspondents in Gaza, Sudan or Ukraine. That danger persists. Yet a second, more insidious injury now permeates newsrooms, even those far removed from physical risk. The first wound is borne by the body; the second by the faculty of judgement, and ultimately by the collective memory that journalism is meant to preserve.

When the machine thinks first

Bernard Stiegler diagnosed the condition before the advent of generative AI. The proletarian, he argued,

is anyone stripped of professional knowledge in favour of a machine, yet retained in post. Dispossessed, still present at the desk, but no longer the architect of their own expertise. Artificial intelligence no longer merely polishes the output at the end of the editorial process; as Ezra Eeman notes, it now intervenes at the very inception of the act. We have entered an era of pre-thinking and pre-decision, where the cumulative effect of these delegations erodes the space in which editorial judgement once took shape.

For broadcasters, that space was known as the edit. For instance, the hours spent immersed in rushes, selecting which frames to retain and which to discard, constituted the process by which narrative coherence emerged. E.M. Forster asked, 'How do I know what I think till I see what I say?' The cut is not a record of judgement already formed; it is the very means by which judgement is forged, and that means is now being relinquished.

The evidence is unequivocal. A Wharton study demonstrated that AI assistance enhances performance when the

model is accurate, but diminishes it below baseline when the model errs. This failure mode is termed *cognitive surrender*. Within weeks, users cease to supervise the system and instead defer to it, all the while convinced of their own agency. In March 2026, a journalist at Mediahuis was suspended for publishing quotations generated by a language model without verification; the models have become so adept that their fabrications are now 'irresistible.'

Yet this does not render the technology an adversary, and it would be disingenuous to suggest otherwise, particularly for media operating beyond the wealthiest markets. Investigative teams now analyse document troves that would once have required years of manual scrutiny. Archives preserved for decades have become searchable and multilingual sources of evidence. In these applications, journalists are restored to the uniquely human aspects of their craft. When deployed without clear intent, however, the same systems truncate the reporter's thinking rather than extend their reach. These tools are not neutral; they serve those who have predetermined their purpose.

The new cost in the newsroom

Most newsrooms have yet to make such determinations, and the omission carries a price. Byung-Chul Han describes a society exhausted by self-exploitation, mislabeled as freedom. Left unguided, automation has generated the fatigue of perpetual oversight, a working day without a cognitive endpoint where the mind might rest. The machine does not tire;

the auditor does. Han Kang's *Human Acts* asserts that testimony is borne in the body, that the witness pays, and that a society intent on preserving its history must care for those who record it. Trauma is a debt, and it is always paid.

Reporters Without Borders now pairs its legal and material assistance to journalists in danger and in exile with psychological support, on the premise that a correspondent's mind constitutes professional infrastructure no less than the equipment he carries. The Paris Charter on AI and Journalism insists that human agency remain central to editorial decision. Mark Hunyadi proposes something more ambitious: a declaration of the 'rights of the human mind', protecting cognition as we long ago undertook to protect the body. Maria Ressa, describing state pressure on the press, spoke of death by a thousand cuts, a haemorrhage of small wounds until the body politic collapses from exhaustion. The phrase applies equally to what now occurs inside a reporter's head.



“RSF now pairs its legal and material assistance to journalists in danger and in exile with psychological support, on the premise that a correspondent’s mind constitutes professional infrastructure no less than the equipment he carries.”

The question of journalism’s purpose has seldom been more acute. Robert Thomson, chief executive of News Corp, offers a utilitarian response: journalism as a semiconductor, a component to be licensed for integration into others’ finished products. Shuwei Fang articulates the cost of this approach: value now lies in the demand signal, the accumulated insight into what audiences know and seek to know. A newsroom that reduces itself to a component surrenders this signal to the platform. Thomson’s model and Fang’s caution delineate the same fundamental choice: to cultivate a direct relationship with the audience, or to become a mere input leased to another’s system.

A coalition for the human trace

What must endure through this juncture is intentionality. The profession cannot transition from producing information to merely validating it and expect to remain unchanged, let alone retain public trust. What is required is a coalition for the human trace: a recognition that authorship, provenance and accountability are intrinsic to the work, not decorative. As Liz Corbin, EBU Director of News, contends, radical collaboration, even with competitors, is now the sole viable strategy for public service media. Broadcasting unions provide the practical framework: shared



standards, a collective duty of care, and a common refusal to accept exhaustion as a professional norm.

Value now resides not in packaging, but in truth that is unvarnished and embodied. Journalism no longer simply reports on crisis; it has itself become the subject. Artificial intelligence will either redeem the profession or hasten its demise, and the outcome depends on whether journalism can once more become what it was at its zenith: an open, human platform, firmly rooted in reality.

Does good journalism demand a wounded journalist? No. It requires one who remains capable of being affected. The ability to be moved by what one witnesses is not a flaw to be engineered out. It is the profession's last, irreducible advantage: the one faculty a language model can mimic, but has never truly possessed.

<https://www.meta-media.fr/2026/04/22/perouse-2026-faut-il-etre-traumatise-pour-etre-un-bon-journaliste.html>



Kate de Pury

Head of Bureau
European Broadcasting
Union (EBU) in Moscow

Kate covers one of the most complex environments in news today. She worked as News Director for the Associated Press (AP) in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Central Asia, during the years following Moscow's annexation of Crimea. Previously she held senior editorial roles at Reuters and AP.

As Leader for the MA Journalism at Falmouth University in 2021, she launched an online programme focused on news innovation. Her journalism upholds the values of public service media in international reporting and she has a record of newsroom leadership focused on protecting the role and safety of journalists. She regularly contributes to the Economist, reporting from Russia.

JOURNALISTIC RESILIENCE: REPORTING ON RUSSIA

Russia today is an authoritarian country dominated by war, repression, censorship and propaganda. Journalists need to develop a unique level of resilience to work here; alongside editorial standards, networking skills, linguistic and technical training, resilience is now an essential part of the reporter's toolkit when covering Russia.

Journalists in Moscow: 'Walking a Tightrope'

The press corps in Moscow has become much smaller since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. About 20 foreign correspondents are still based in Russia – 10-12 of those permanently reporting in Moscow are journalists working for public service media organisations which are members of the EBU. Other foreign journalists come in and out of Russia on reporting trips (lasting up to four weeks on average) and are based primarily outside the country.

Independent journalists reporting inside Russia (here the focus is on foreign correspondents and local Russian staff in foreign media bureaus) face a tangible and immediate set of legal risks. Working under the Kremlin's pervasive censorship laws—such as those penalising 'false information' about the Russian armed forces with sentences of up to 15 years in prison—each editorial decision we make carries potentially drastic consequences.

One foreign TV correspondent likened these working conditions to “walking a tightrope over a minefield,” where any misstep could bring sudden retaliation. Foreign journalists and Russian staff who work with them must understand the legal context and follow its constant changes, so they **understand ‘the rules.’** An awareness of the rules is essential so we have a framework for the reporting we can still do, while sensibly mitigating the risks. It’s important to emphasise that the risks are higher for Russian staff who are more legally vulnerable; **keeping local staff safe** involves a constant **duty of care** on the part of newsroom editors and correspondents. It’s still critical to keep reporting what we can report, that’s also part of resilience.

For example, we know we can cover events that are in the public domain and where we seek official permission to report – EBU crews filmed at the funeral of opposition leader Alexey Navalny and at the court cases of human rights activists.

This resilience is built on firm, very practical foundations. We follow rigorous safety protocols; we make sure all journalists (foreign and Russian) have current journalist accreditation from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we secure permissions for every shoot, always producing official ‘coverage assignment’ letters for the field crews to show police if needed, when reporting sensitive events.

Protecting yourself and staff online is an absolute priority. In Russia the internet is increasingly monitored by the security services, so we have strict safety protocols around social media and messaging platforms, limiting visible exposure to content which is deemed ‘extremist’ by the Russian authorities. As journalists we need to monitor content from government and opposition sides and we do this via VPN on office and mobile devices. Any online news coverage from sources banned in Russia is not handled by Moscow staff but by newsroom colleagues outside of Russia.

Take full responsibility for your safety and that of colleagues and contacts, says one EBU member correspondent in Moscow. Doing this means being in full control of your tech and this is another of their rules for resilience – this way you can safeguard your contacts and sources by being discreet in messages and calls, only discussing hot topics on a safe platform or not at all – better face to face.

For journalists operating in Russia their **‘duty of care’** extends to people we interview, even for ‘vox pops’. Producers prepare questions carefully (so there is no chance they will be accused of provoking anti-state or anti-Russian sentiment) and if there is a respondent who gives an answer which could put them at risk, the producer on the spot is obliged to point this out and let them know it should not be used or their safety could be compromised.

“Moderate audacity also plays a critical role in ensuring resilience,” says another EBU member correspondent and part of this is not taking no for an answer. **Persistence** enabled journalists at this EBU member in Moscow finally to access official Kremlin events, after many requests for accreditation were initially denied. Similarly, when reporting from conflict zones such as occupied east Ukraine (not all foreign journalists travel to this territory for legal reasons, but other organisations regard this reporting as part of their job), their team minimised legal and physical risks by complying with local guidelines and working with NGOs like the Red Cross (both Russian and international branches).

‘Look after your own well-being’: a foreign international agency journalist described the psychological toll of working in Russia as tantamount to “living in a cage with a dangerous serpent—one false move and you are dead.” His approach to survival involves maintaining toughness and agility, and making sure that during periods of heightened stress, he takes time out to recharge through “solitary walks or reading”, practices which allow him to regain composure and the distance to sharpen decision-making. He highlights how fear itself can feel oppressive, “dripping from the ceiling in the early hours,” but insists that to counter fear, the journalist needs first to have a full understanding of risks,

to constantly and rationally assess the reality of the situation.

Staying rational is a key element of resilience in Russia, says another TV correspondent. “Don’t overreact, stay rational, don’t over-interpret every sign as indicating you are under surveillance, otherwise it drives you crazy. “Be aware that in this highly restricted environment, **any ‘scoop’ could be a trap** – we all remember the example of Wall Street Journal journalist Evan Gershkovich who was arrested for espionage in a Russian Federal Security Service sting in 2023.

Stay connected to your trusted peers and close circle; to safeguard well-being ‘sometimes being alone here it’s difficult to face the sadness of the whole situation,” says another foreign correspondent based in Moscow for an EBU member TV network.

Stay impartial and safe, ensure access. Journalists here understand that it’s part of the job to report on Putin and the Kremlin, the world needs to know what is going on in the Russian state. In addition, foreign journalists operating in Russia need to ensure access to government events, so we preserve relationships with officialdom, but always with a professional distance and impartial approach. Journalists inside Russia are uniquely placed to add context and ‘fact-check’ official Russian voices, but understand for security reasons, this is

often best done by colleagues adding balancing voices outside.

Don't be used as an instrument of Russian state

propaganda. Russian journalists working for state-owned or Kremlin-allied outlets operate strictly under government directives. Their mission is not to question power but to uphold it, perpetuating conspiracy theories and highlighting Russia's 'historical grievances' as part of an all-pervasive propaganda campaign.

Stay vigilant, just say no. State TV journalists or pro-Kremlin bloggers report on the activities of foreign media in Russia—whether during a trip to the field or at official press conferences—and it's critically important for foreign journalists not to allow themselves to be used as part of a propaganda piece to be broadcast on state TV. This can result in abuse from passers-by in the street, or harassment on social media.

Stay cool and be well-prepared. Another foreign correspondent working in Moscow for an EBU member says "...be aware that much of what we endure here in our interactions is not authentic but the result of a well-orchestrated propaganda operation - it's a game, it's a show – conducted by agents provocateurs who are paid by the hour." They describe how "very tall, masked agents" stick their phones up in front of the correspondent's face, filming, during live standups or interviews. "I tend to look right in their eyes trying to convey my disbelief and my embarrassment, to let them know I know they've been ordered to do this. Then when they go home, they will realise how embarrassing the whole thing was and how totally unphased this correspondent was," says the correspondent, describing their strategy for dealing with such situations.

Balance your editorial principles with the need for

safety. The biggest challenge is protecting local staff and interviewees, says another European correspondent. "I often hold back harsh sound bites from interviewees ... I

want to show there are still 'the other Russians,' but really, one cannot show them," they explain. Their approach underscores the delicate balance foreign journalists must strike when attempting to amplify alternative voices without putting individuals at risk of retaliation from Russian authorities.

Resilience in an environment like Russia balances determination, audacity, and a strong sense of knowing when to pause and reevaluate. In one of the world's most restrictive media environments, psychological well-being and the safety of staff remain key elements of enduring resilience. Here, journalistic resilience is not just a product of professional conviction but the outcome of careful preparation, adaptability, and practical strategies:

- Risk Assessments and Safety Planning. Journalists meticulously evaluate risks before reporting, whether covering drone attacks in Moscow or frontlines in Donetsk.
- Protecting Local Teams and Interviewees. Priority is given to safeguarding through careful outreach and non-provocative questions.
- Digital Vigilance. Social media usage is rigorously monitored to prevent exposure, keeping both individuals and teams secure. All comms are evaluated for security to keep journalists and sources safe.
- Flexibility in Editorial Decisions. Journalists remain willing to alter or abandon stories based on safety concerns.
- 'Moderate Audacity.' Navigating high-risk situations demands bravery tempered by adherence to protocols, ensuring the balance between bold reporting and safety. For example, journalists entering Russia are often held up and questioned by the security services at the border. Here if you know your legal rights, this helps you navigate the situation and handle yourself with confidence and firmness. That in turn can help the journalist get through the process with less stress.
- Self-awareness and well-being. Take time to destress, recognize the fear factor in the Russia environment and plan strategies to deal with it, stay connected with a trusted network.



Dipak Bhattarai
Pacific Project Director
BBC Media Action

Based in Suva, Fiji, Dipak is an experienced media development professional and journalist with over 25 years in the industry. He has worked with radio, television, print, and digital media journalists across Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, often in challenging media environments. In his current role, he leads BBC Media Action's work across Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga, and Solomon Islands on strengthening media capacity and supporting public interest journalism. He is a strong advocate for public service media and believes in the power of journalism to inform, connect, and empower communities.

BEYOND THE BYLINES: WHAT IT REALLY TAKES TO KEEP PACIFIC JOURNALISM ALIVE

I still think about a conversation I had with a radio journalist in Suva year and half ago. We had just wrapped up a media workshop, and as people filtered out, she stayed behind. She didn't have a question exactly. She just said, quietly, "I don't know how much longer I can do this."

She wasn't burnt out from the work itself. She loved the work. She was burnt out from everything surrounding it, the harassment after a story on political corruption, the absence of anyone in her newsroom to talk to about a domestic violence case she'd covered the week before, the feeling that the whole system expected her to simply absorb it all and keep going.

I've been in and around Pacific journalism for long enough to know she is not alone. And yet, we keep having the wrong conversation.

Every media forum I attend these days orbits the same sun: technology, algorithms, generative AI. Platform optimisation. And honestly, these conversations matter, AI has moved from an experiment to something closer to infrastructure. It has changed how information is produced, translated, distributed and consumed, sometimes faster than editorial policy can follow.

But here's the tension that keeps nagging at me: the more we automate the information ecosystem, the more irreplaceable the human at the centre of it becomes. And we are not taking care of that human.

AI can generate content on a scale. It cannot sit with a grieving family in a flood-affected village and understand what story needs to be told. It cannot navigate the unspoken political tensions in a community meeting. It cannot recognise when a source's hesitation means danger. That judgment, earned through experience, relationships, and cultural understanding is what audiences across the Pacific are relying on when they turn to professional journalism. The technical ability to produce information has never been cheaper. The human ability to make it trustworthy has never been more valuable.

A region that asks too much

Pacific journalists operate under conditions that are, frankly, remarkable in their difficulty. Many cover everything cyclones, elections, gender violence, public health, community disputes sometimes within the same week, in small newsrooms with minimal specialist support, on salaries that don't reflect the weight of the responsibility.

BBC Media Action's recent audience research across Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga, and Solomon Islands paints a telling picture of the landscape these journalists are working in. Audiences are migrating toward social media and informal digital networks for speed, but they're still turning to established media organisations when they want to trust what they're reading. In Papua

New Guinea, even in communities with limited television access or daily internet use, formal news bulletins remain strongly associated with reliability. Audiences aren't choosing professional journalism because it's fastest. They're choosing it because it feels safer.

That trust places an enormous burden on the people producing journalism. In Samoa, the same research found that social media was overwhelmingly seen as the main source of misinformation, the coconut wireless gone digital, spreading fast and acquiring false legitimacy through repetition. Journalists are now expected not just to report, but to continuously debunk, filter, verify, and contextualise in near real-time. And it is taking a toll.

The specific cruelty of being online while doing this work

There's something particularly exhausting about having to defend the very concept of evidence while simultaneously being targeted for practicing it. Across the Pacific, journalists describe a cycle that goes something like this: report something true, face a coordinated pile-on online, watch the story get reframed by the subject of your reporting as "bias," and start again the next day. In an information environment where politicians have discovered that discrediting the messenger is often easier than addressing the message, this cycle is deliberate. It's designed to wear people down.

For women journalists, the dynamic is sharper and more personal. Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based

Violence has become an urgent conversation in Pacific media circles, and rightly so. The harassment women reporters face isn't just professional criticism, it's sexualised, it's targeted, and it's designed not to challenge their work but to silence them entirely. In small island communities where professional and personal lives overlap heavily, an online attack doesn't stay online. It spills into the market, into family gatherings, into the everyday spaces these women inhabit.

When journalists are pushed out of public discourse this way, we don't just lose their reporting. We lose perspectives, facts and verified information. That's a democratic loss, not just a personal one.

Trauma is not a byline

Here's something we don't say enough: local Pacific journalists don't get to leave. Foreign correspondents fly in for a crisis and fly out. The journalist from that coastal community in Solomon Islands, or that settlement in Port Moresby, goes home to the same neighbourhood. The trauma doesn't end when the story is filed.

I've heard journalists describe domestic violence cases, narcotics crimes, political instability, and deeply sensitive reconciliation processes with no psychological support available and no real expectation that they

should need any. Newsroom culture, for a long time, quietly enforced the idea that needing help was weakness. You were supposed to “cope.” Many did. But coping and being well are not the same thing, and the cost has accumulated over years.

Repeated exposure to trauma without support leads to burnout. Burnout leads to experienced journalists leaving the profession. In small newsrooms that are already stretched, losing one experienced person can reshape an entire editorial operation. Journalist wellbeing is not a soft issue. It is a structural one. And we've been treating it as optional for too long.

What resilience actually requires

I want to be clear about what I mean when I talk about resilience, because the word gets used in ways that quietly shift responsibility onto individuals. Resilience is not “developing a thicker skin.” It's not silent endurance or private stress management. Real institutional resilience means building systems around journalists that allow them to sustain their work overtime, systems that don't currently exist in most Pacific newsrooms.

Some media organisations have started establishing partnerships with external counselling providers, and this is genuinely important, not just as a service, but as a signal that help-seeking is normal and supported. But that's the floor, not the ceiling. Newsrooms also need formalised protocols around harassment response,

trauma exposure, digital safety, and workload. Managers need training to recognise burnout, not just to respond to it once it's already acute. And structural inequalities, unfair pay, insecure contracts, unrealistic expectations need to be named and addressed. You can't build resilience on top of exhaustion.

Where internal newsroom systems are weak, professional associations and networks need to fill real gaps. Organisations like the Pacific Islands News Association, national journalist associations, Women in Media, and media councils need providing peer support, mentorship, and collective protection mechanisms that individual newsrooms can't always offer. Some of the most meaningful work happening right now isn't highly technical. It is

journalists being able to sit in a room together more often and say honestly what they're carrying, without fear of professional consequences.

Media development partners and funders also need to look honestly at how their own models contribute to the problem. Short-term, output-heavy project cycles don't allow local media institutions to build the kind of sustainable support structures they need. Long-term core funding for journalist associations, peer-support networks, and mental health infrastructure isn't glamorous. It doesn't produce the kind of visible outputs that make for compelling donor reports. But it is essential.

“Managers need training to recognise burnout, not just to respond to it once it's already acute.”

Protecting the people who protect public truth

The Pacific has always understood something important about how communities survive hard times: you don't get through a cyclone alone. The same logic applies here. Journalism in this region will not remain credible and independent if the people doing it are isolated, unsupported, and running on empty.

As AI accelerates content production and digital platforms continue to fracture public trust, the value of a journalist who knows their community, has earned their trust, and is willing to do the painstaking work of verification, that value will only grow. But it won't be available to audiences if we keep treating the people who provide it as expendable.

I keep thinking about that journalist in Fiji. She's still working. Still filing. Still doing the job she said she wasn't sure she could keep doing. But the system around her hasn't changed much. And at some point, commitment alone is not enough to hold things together.

Building resilient media requires investment, accountability, and the willingness to treat journalist wellbeing not as a nice-to-have, but as the foundation that everything else depends on.

To protect the integrity of public information, we must first protect the people entrusted to find it, verify it, and tell it.



Leona O'Neill
Founder of MediaStrong

Leona is the Founder and Director of MediaStrong, an author, TEDx speaker, and former journalist with 25 years' experience in hard news. She delivers international training on trauma, psychological safety, and mental wellbeing in high-pressure workplaces.

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE: BUILDING PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE NEWSROOMS IN A TRAUMA- FACING INDUSTRY

Journalism is a trauma-facing profession, and it may also be one of the few remaining professions still deep in denial about the fact.

Lawyers who deal with harrowing cases, mental health counsellors who listen to difficult narratives, police officers, doctors, paramedics and many other professionals who are exposed to a huge amount of trauma and human suffering through their work have very well lit up support pathways to help them process, cope and continue to do their jobs well.

Yet journalists are expected to go into the worst situations imaginable - events that often revolve around horror, terror, death and injury – gather all the minute detail, capture the emotion and the gruesome, horrific facts, and come out somehow undamaged and unscathed as if they are capable of suppressing the brain's normal human reaction to trauma.

Then they are expected to go back into an environment – the newsroom – where, more often than not, showing any kind of struggle with a story or

experience is seen as a weakness and an inability to do the job professionally.

When journalists are exposed to distressing scenes, hostile environments or traumatic material, the brain activates a survival response. The amygdala detects threat. Stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline flood the body, and the pre-frontal cortex – the rational thinking part of the brain – shuts down as the body goes into survival mode.

Short term fight or flight responses are helpful to help us function under pressure, to work quickly, gather information and meet deadlines. But when this state becomes chronic – as it is often the case when we are on the ceaseless newsroom rollercoaster – the impact is profound. Anxiety,

poor decision making, emotional dysregulation that follows us home and reduced creativity are common.

Journalists are expected to be hard-nosed and tough, to run towards the danger, to shut off their human emotions, to put the story first always, to not become part of the story. This might not be in any journalism guidebook, but the ethos is nevertheless ingrained in all of us in newsrooms all over the World.

There may very well be support available in newsrooms and Human Resources may do an excellent job in helping staff, but because of those still toxic mindsets we hold as journalists, there is a fear about admitting struggle and losing face, not being tough and hard-nosed, not being able to do the job



as it demands. And in some cultures, mental health struggles are seen as a spiritual crisis. So, more often than not, that help and support never gets accessed, people stay quiet, they push their feelings down and often lean on unhealthy crutches like alcohol, drugs and overwork to dull or distract or help them through.

The thing about human brains is that they are exactly the same as other brains, they will run normal brain functions and act in normal brain ways when faced with trauma. We have to stop pretending that we as journalists are somehow immune and have the superhuman ability to switch these off, to push trauma down in order to get the job done.

The thing about pushing trauma down and not processing it is that it requires us to put up emotional barriers to protect ourselves, to stop the horrors that we see getting in. But those emotional barriers also stop empathy and compassion getting out, with the result that we become detached from our stories and sources. And then our journalism can become sensationalised and do more harm than good. When empathy is dulled, storytelling suffers. And it is often not one single traumatic incident that causes harm, but the cumulative impact of many unprocessed experiences over time that the grim conveyor belt of doom news provides.

Trauma exposure can cause compassion fatigue, feeling numb, that one harrowing story runs into the next

and to the next with the result that nothing shocks us, nothing scares us, nothing even moves us. That feeling will be familiar to many of us in journalism.

All of these things can be helped by support and the normalisation of conversations around newsroom mental health. And all of that starts with leadership. When healthy, normal, non-judgemental, empathetic, compassionate and understanding conversations around the emotional toll of this job flows down from leaders, newsroom staff listen, absorb, imagine that it's OK to say something has landed on them. In turn stigma is removed, fear about speaking up is quashed. People feel they are allowed to be human.

Most of our newsroom leaders have been there themselves, as reporters on the ground, absorbing all of the horror and terror and grief and human suffering. They often carry the battle scars. Sharing those experiences – because we all have stories that landed on us – and raising the volume on conversations around newsroom mental health doesn't make us weak, it helps us to process and stay strong so we can keep telling the important stories.

Ignoring the issue, pretending we are somehow immune to trauma exposure helps no one, not ourselves, not our journalism, not society. Journalists are dehumanised enough by society, particularly in these trying times, we

need not also dehumanise ourselves by thinking we are not impacted by the difficult stories we carry.

Trauma is structurally intertwined in journalism. Leadership that understands this changes everything. Because once we recognise that journalists are not immune to trauma, the responsibility shifts. It becomes an organisational issue, not an individual one and solutions follow.

One of the most critical roles of newsroom leadership is to break the silence surrounding mental health. Because stigma thrives in environments where vulnerability is punished or ignored. Leaders therefore play a decisive role in resetting that culture.

This does not require grand and expensive gestures. It requires visible and consistent signals. Quite simply it is acknowledging that journalism is a trauma-exposed profession, normalising emotional responses to difficult work, encouraging open conversations without fear of judgement and making it clear that asking for support is a mark of professionalism, not weakness. When leaders themselves model this behaviour, culture begins to shift.

But culture changes must be supported by structure. Education, recognition, trauma-awareness training, normalising conversations, positioning psychological safety as equal to physical safety, setting boundaries, introducing peer support networks and encouraging decompression and newsroom



emotional regulation practices, story rotation as standard, encouraging time away from distressing material, protecting rest periods and sacred spaces will all help to turn the tanker around with regards newsroom mental health.

The always-on newsroom culture can become an always activated nervous system with consequences for both individuals and organisations. Journalists who are psychologically supported are better able to think clearly, make ethical decisions, and engage with sources in a humane and respectful way. That will always make journalism better.

The journalism industry stands at a critical moment. The pressures are intensifying - from digital burnout to public hostility, from financial instability to exposure to trauma. But there is also an opportunity to fundamentally rethink how newsrooms operate to protect and preserve us. This begins with leadership.

We must care for those who bear witness.



Hanna Harvima

Policy Director, UNI Media,
Entertainment & Arts
UNI Global Union

Hanna is a Policy Director at UNI Media, Entertainment & Arts (UNI MEI) which is part of UNI Global Union. She coordinates the work of UNI MEI in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as in the live performance sector globally. Some of the recent work covers topics such as health and safety and risk assessment in the live performance sector, and the just transformation of the live performance and audiovisual sectors during and due to the global covid crisis. She is a lawyer and has a background in labour law. She is a Finnish and Swiss national, and is based at the UNI headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland.

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MEDIA SECTOR REQUIRES URGENT MEASURES & JOINT COMMITMENT

In the past several years, the media and entertainment sector has undergone profound technological, economic, and social transformations, with companies and workers facing structural challenges that have had a lasting impact on the sector. Factors that were already present in the sector, such as precarious employment, financial instability and irregular hours, were aggravated by the COVID crisis. Together with the challenging situation of the sector that followed the COVID shutdown, working conditions in the sector have grown more precarious, rather than improving. Such stressors create a working environment where mental health has become a significant concern, characterized by high rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout.

Long and irregular working hours, together with tight deadlines, contribute to stress and anxiety, and there often isn't adequate time for rest and for taking care of one's well-being. Consistent lack of sleep is not unusual among the workers in the sector and is a known factor in mental health problems. The challenge to maintain social connections because of working hours is an additional element that contributes to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

However, seeking out help is often difficult, for fear of being stigmatised or of it leading to professional consequences.

Recent surveys and research indicate that the situation is worsening. In the Film & TV Charity's 2024 Looking Glass survey workers in the sector reported record-low self-ratings of their mental health, and a majority of the workers said they were considering leaving the industry because of how it was affecting their mental health. According to the same survey a significant percentage had had suicidal thoughts. The same percentage (30%) of workers reported often feeling lonely. This figure had increased since the previous survey in 2022 and was concerningly higher than the national average of 8%.

Workplace bullying and harassment are increasing in the entertainment industry, being both a cause for mental health issues, but also a consequence of the same. There is also an increase in the incidents of harassment of media workers from the general public, both in-person and online, with the anonymity of online platforms adding to the problem. Union surveys have shown that groups such as women, workers of colour, indigenous workers, and LGBTQI+ workers are disproportionately targeted for harassment. Violence and harassment may be less frequently reported than other risks, but they are among the most damaging, with serious consequences to mental and physical health.

UNI Media, Entertainment & Arts and its member unions are responding to these challenges through their collective strength and through building coordinated dialogue solutions with regional and global employer associations as well as through regulatory advocacy to engage governments and international institutions. To support social dialogue and collective bargaining solutions, unions are sharing information and raising awareness, and working to include mental health in bargaining. For instance in the UK, Bectu, in consultation with the industry, has developed a welfare policy which provides a model that companies in the film and TV sector can use and adjust to their needs. IATSE in the US provides on its website different resources that workers in the sector can access for more information on mental health as well as support measures. In Australia, the MEAA has set up a Wellbeing Committee to educate and support the mental health of workers. The Committee has developed different resources, such as an online wellness portal and a database that provides information on health care professionals that have expertise in the arts and entertainment sector. These are just a few examples of the specialized support and services that unions offer workers.

On the other hand, it is crucial that prevention is given more priority. Prevention should address work design, organisation and management.

Employers need to implement psychosocial risk assessments of their operations and recognise the elements that can be harmful to the health and safety of their workers. This is necessary before any measures and processes at the workplace can be put in place.

Mental health protection at the workplace is a health and safety issue and a collective bargaining issue, and mental health clauses need to be included in collective bargaining agreements. It is necessary for employers and unions to work together to change the working culture that has proven detrimental to the mental health of workers. Employers need to involve unions and worker representatives in the design and implementation of preventive measures. Some such measures can be introducing safeguards for working time, creating confidential channels for reporting incidents and safety issues, and training managers. It is also crucial to monitor the implementation of policies and procedures and to evaluate the outcomes of feedback from workers and unions.

The necessary safeguards can be put in place when there are adequate processes to identify and address the risks, and when there is a joint commitment towards healthier workplaces.

“Mental health protection at the workplace is a health and safety issue...and mental health clauses need to be included in collective bargaining agreements.”

ⁱ https://filmtvcharity.org.uk/assets/documents/Reports/LOOKING_GLASS_REPORT_2024.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://union.bectu.org.uk/resource/bectu-welfare-policy.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.meaa.org/campaigns/wellbeing/>

WE HAVEN'T STARTED WORKING; SO WHY ARE WE ALREADY EXHAUSTED?



Au Yi Xuen

Student
University of
Wollongong Malaysia

Au Yi Xuen, also known as Averlyn is a second-year Media Production student specialising in multi-platform storytelling. With a diverse portfolio spanning photography, videography, and event management, she bridges technical execution with audience engagement. Beyond her work as a host and interviewer, Averlyn has served as a brand content creator, a university spokesperson, and a student helper administrator. These varied roles has given her a 360-degree view of the media lifecycle, enabling her to advocate for a more sustainable and resilient future for the next generation of emerging media professionals.

GUARDING A JOURNALIST'S MIND IN THE AGE OF ENDLESS OPINIONS



Liew Li Tian

Student
University of
Wollongong Malaysia

Liew Li Tian, also known as Elly, is a Bachelor of Communication student. She currently serves as the President of VoiceLah!, a campus-led newsroom. Throughout her academic journey, she engaged in journalism and media-related forums, including the 2026 Asiavision Coordinators' Meeting and the Global Investigative Journalism Conference (GIJC 2025), which has broadened her understanding of global media practices.

WE HAVEN'T STARTED WORKING; SO WHY ARE WE ALREADY EXHAUSTED?



In the traditional media narrative, “burnout” is treated like a prestigious badge of honour, reserved for veteran war correspondents or seasoned news producers with 20 years of sleepless nights. It is seen as a destination—a point reached after decades of high-pressure deadlines and relentless field reporting. Yet, as a second-year Media Production student at the University of Wollongong Malaysia, I look at my peers and see a different reality. We are standing at the starting line of our careers, and we are already running on empty.

The question for industry leaders is simple: If we haven't even entered the professional newsroom yet, why is our generation already so tired?

The “swiss army knife” trap: my multimodal reality

The modern media curriculum—and the industry's entry-level expectations—demand that we become a “one-man crew” before we even get our diplomas. During my time in the Media Production program, I haven't just been a student; I have been a photographer lugging heavy tripods across campus, a videographer managing lighting setups under the hot sun, an event manager handling complex logistics, and an interviewer trying to maintain a professional persona on camera even when I'm running on four hours of sleep.

On top of this academic load, I've worked as a content creator for a small business brand. This meant that while my peers in other courses were resting, I was constantly scrolling through trends, editing short-form videos on my phone, and responding to comments at midnight. In the production world, we don't have a "tech support" department to call when Premiere Pro crashes for the fifth time in a row or when an audio file from an important interview comes back with too much background noise. We are the tech department, the creative team, and the administrative staff all at once. This results in a massive cognitive overload. We are training our bodies to ignore basic physical needs just to get a project exported by a 9:00 am deadline. This "hustle culture" is often romanticised in film schools, but it is just setting a dangerous precedent for a career of self-neglect.

Timeline trauma: Processing the world in 4K

There is also a hidden emotional cost to being a production student that textbooks rarely mention: secondary trauma. As students, we don't just "watch" the news; we live inside the raw footage. While a viewer sees a polished, two-minute report on a humanitarian crisis or a local tragedy, the student editor has spent 12 hours staring at the unedited, graphic shots that were too raw for broadcast.

I have spent nights in the edit suite, scrubbing through timelines of raw

human pain, trying to find the "perfect frame" for a documentary project. We do this often alone in our dorm rooms, without the professional counselling or peer-support networks that major newsrooms provide. This exposure leads to what I call anticipatory burnout—a feeling of being emotionally drained by the world's problems before we've even had a chance to officially report on them. When your "homework" involves manipulating trauma in high definition, the mental fatigue is a heavy weight to carry.

The stigma of the “Stop” button

The biggest barrier to building resilient media people is the current culture surrounding “stigma.” In many traditional media circles, admitting you are tired is seen as a sign of weakness. Unfortunately, this begins at university level. We are often told, “If you can’t handle the pressure of a student film, you’ll never survive in the real world.”

However, during my time as a student helper and a spokesperson for a university course, I noticed something interesting. The students who pushed themselves the hardest weren’t

necessarily the most creative; they were just the most exhausted. When we force ourselves to stay “always on,” we lose the ability to think critically. True resilience isn’t the ability to work 20 hours straight; it is the wisdom to know when the quality of the work—and the health of the creator—is being compromised. We need a culture that prizes “Sustainable Performance” over the “always on” cycle. Universities and organisations must lead the way in teaching us how to set technical boundaries.

Bridging the gap: A call to action

To the leaders at this year’s Global News Forum in Sydney: I am writing this as a member of your future workforce. We are ready to contribute, to innovate, and to take on the challenges of a changing media landscape. But we are asking you to help us protect the human element behind the technology.

Resilience should not be something we have to “prove” by burning out before the age of 22. It should be built into the system. If the industry wants a fresh, energetic pipeline of talent, it must start by acknowledging the “Pre-Career Burnout” happening in universities today. We need mentors, not just bosses. We need sustainable workflows, not just faster rendering speeds.

Instead of pointing out the fatigue, it is more important to build a bridge toward a more sustainable industry that I genuinely want to be a part of. We need to move away from romanticising the “all-nighter” and instead implement structured mentorship that teaches us how to manage our mental energy as carefully as we manage our shutter speeds. I hope that “Technical Boundaries” will become a priority for our universities and business leaders, demonstrating that genuine resilience is the judgment to know when to shut off the laptop so the creative fire doesn’t burn out. We can make sure that when we eventually begin our professional lives, we are coming with the enthusiasm to innovate rather



than just the desire to quit by shifting the focus from merely surviving the hustle to encouraging long-term performance.

Final thought: Protecting the future pulse

If the common goal is to build “Resilient Media People,” the industry must look toward its roots. The exhaustion we feel as students is not a lack of passion; it is the result of a system that expects us to be masters of every tool and slaves to every notification. We are the future of your newsrooms and your field crews, but our ability to tell the world’s stories depends entirely on our own well-being.

Let us build an industry where the next generation doesn’t have to choose between their career and their health before they have even begun. We want to make sure that when we finally do start working, we have enough energy left to stay and make a difference.

¹ <https://drivinginnovation.ie.edu/why-students-are-more-tired-than-ever-the-real-science-behind-low-energy-levels/>

GUARDING A JOURNALIST'S MIND IN THE AGE OF ENDLESS OPINIONS



In November 2022, I watched from the sidelines as Malaysia's first post-pandemic general election spiralled into five days of pure chaos. I was still in high school, not yet old enough to vote, but I felt the tension everywhere. When the results came in, and no one had a majority, the country just... stopped. In that silence, social media exploded. Unverified stories, fake victories, and fearful rumours moved faster than the truth. It was a wake-up call for my generation: we aren't suffering from a lack of information; we are drowning in too much of it.

This information overload is exactly why people are starting to look back toward

professional journalists instead of just following every loud voice on TikTok. We want to know what is actually happening, and more importantly, what it means for our future. But as we try to find the truth, we run into a major problem. Our media is stuck between a digital wild west and old laws like the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA 1984) that feel more like a leash than a safety net.

On paper, the PPPA 1984 is supposed to stop the publication of harmful content and keep things orderly. But if you look at the history, it's often used to silence people who ask the 'wrong' questions. For example, The Edge was suspended for three months just for reporting on the 1MDB scandal. When a law can be used to stop journalists from exposing corruption, we have to ask: is it actually protecting the public, or...

We are seeing this exact pattern repeat itself today in a wave of arbitrary book bans. In April 2026, the Home Ministry used the PPPA to ban historical memoirs like Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh and Komrad ASI, alongside academic works like Rebecca

E. Karl's biography of Mao Zedong and the Tamil novel Sigandi. These bans were enforced under the guise of protecting "national security" or "public morality," yet the Home Minister himself admitted he was "firefighting" because he only learned about some of these bans after they were already in effect. When the state treats history and literature as radioactive material, it isn't safeguarding our values; it is erasing the diversity of our national narrative.

It's the same story in Singapore with their Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulate Act (POFMA). While it's meant to stop online falsehoods, it has led to things like Google banning political ads to avoid legal trouble. Critics argue this makes it way harder for opposition parties to get their

message out. When the government becomes the sole arbiter of what is "true," independent journalism begins to suffocate.

So, how do journalists survive this? It takes more than just being good at research. It takes "cognitive resilience." For a student like me, that means learning how to step back from the trending topics and the comment sections to think for myself. Journalists must do the same thing on a much bigger scale. They must resist

the urge to just post whatever is viral and instead focus on what is verified, even when there is massive pressure from the government or the public to pick a side.

Newsrooms also need to back their people up. Instead of racing to be the first to post information, they should be the first to get the facts right. This kind of self-regulation is the best defence we have. If the media can prove it is credible and responsible, there is less of an excuse for the government to step in with restrictive laws.

The future of our democracy depends on a media that is allowed to be diverse and critical. At a higher level, we need constant dialogue between the people making the laws and the people reporting the news. We cannot have a healthy democracy if the rules are made in a vacuum. We need transparency. If a license is suspended, the public deserves a clear and honest



explanation. Measures that are only about restraint and suppression will never lead to unity. Instead, they just lead to more distrust and backlash from a public that feels like they are being lied to.

The ability to recognise how external pressures influence our internal thoughts is the backbone of originality and truth. Right now, the pressure from both government control and public expectation is making it hard for journalism to survive. In this atmosphere, cognitive resilience is not just a buzzword. It is a necessity. It is what will sustain journalistic independence and keep the public's trust alive.

As I prepare to enter this world as a voter and a citizen, I realise that true media pluralism is not something we can simply legislate into existence; it is a discipline we must practice every day. We must support the brave voices that challenge the status quo and demand a future where our right to know the truth is never sacrificed for the comfort of the few.



BUILDING RESILIENT MEDIA PEOPLE

ABU NEWS REPORT

THIRD EDITION



Asia-Pacific
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