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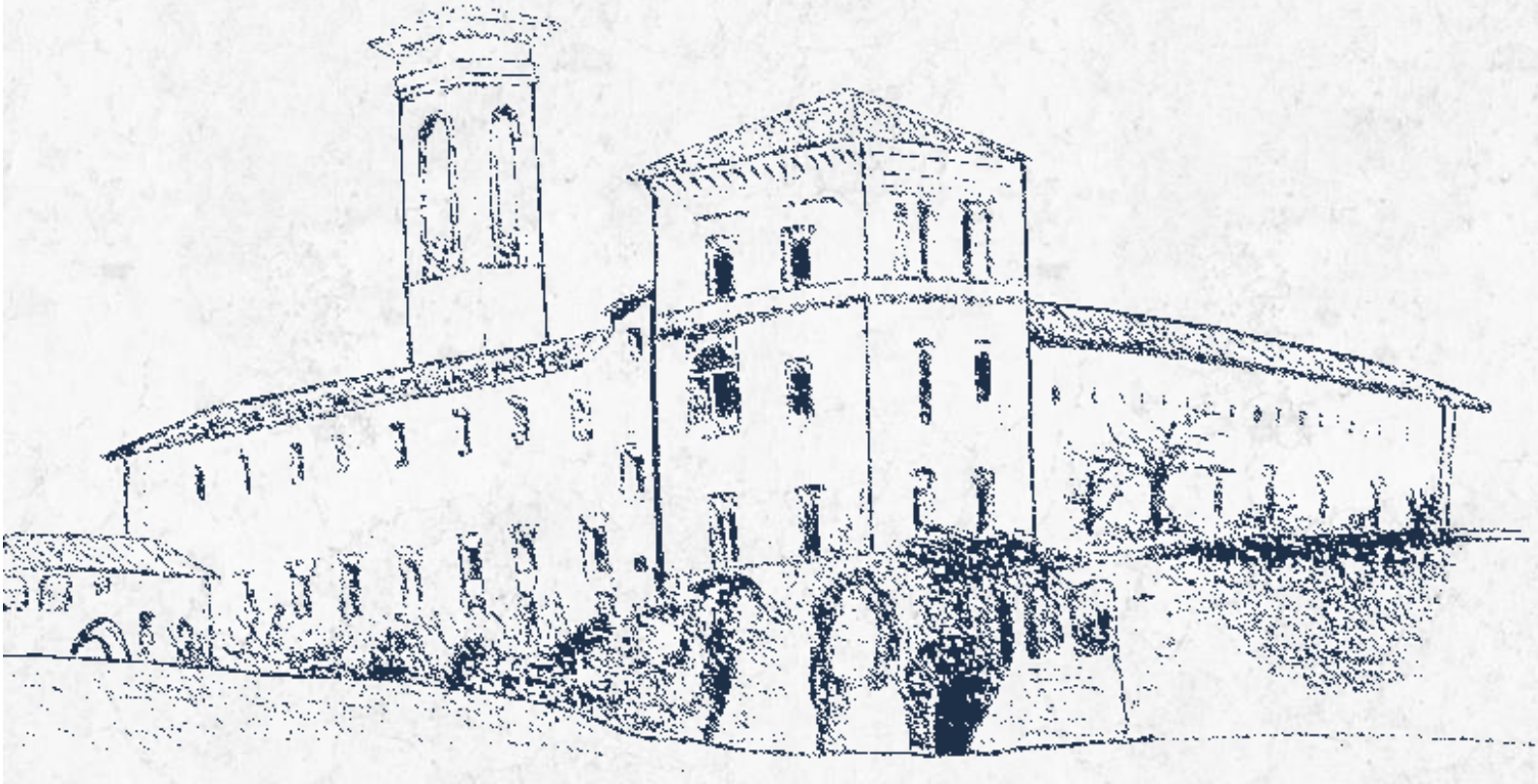

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Journalism and Job Insecurity: The Psychophysical State of Freelance Journalists in Italy

Giacomo Buoncompagni *

Abstract. From a cultural, technological and economic perspective, the field of journalism is in a constant state of change. Journalists frequently work under precarious conditions that involve risk, violence and aggression, all of which can negatively affect their health and quality of life. The appeal of journalism as a career is declining due to falling revenues, emerging technologies, redundancies and decreasing circulation, among other factors. Those currently employed in the news industry are increasingly expected to do more with fewer resources, while long-standing pressures such as tight deadlines, excessive workloads and intense competition continue to exacerbate physical, legal and ethical challenges. This study aims to examine the overall state of journalism and the wellbeing of its practitioners, with a particular focus on the Italian media landscape. In particular, it highlights the precarious working conditions that affect a specific category of professionals within journalism: freelancers.

Keywords: *Freelance; Journalism; Health; Risk; Precariousness.*

Introduction

The issue of quality journalism has long been the subject of debate. It is increasingly demanded by public opinion in an era characterised by professional hybridisation, transparency, accelerated information flows and digital content overload. However, quality journalism also entails risks

* Department of Political Science, Communication and International Relations (SPOCRI) University of Macerata. Email: g.buoncompagni@unimc.it

for those responsible for selecting, prioritising and disseminating news, whether in conflict zones or during sensitive investigations. At the same time, journalists often lack adequate protection and support, while facing diminishing rewards.

Contrary to public perception, salaries in the journalism sector have declined at an unsustainable rate. Many freelancers are leaving the profession or taking on additional employment, leaving them exposed to risks such as frivolous lawsuits. This precarious situation particularly affects one category of journalist: the freelancer.

1. Outside Newsrooms

Freelance journalism refers to the work of self-employed writers who undertake regular or occasional assignments for news organisations. Depending on their agreement with the organisation, freelance journalists may be paid by the hour, by the word, or per assignment. Freelancers operate across all areas of journalism, including sports, current affairs and entertainment[1].

Like all other forms of reporting, freelance journalism is subject to the same professional standards, and those working in the field are required to undergo the same checks as their counterparts in mainstream media. While journalistic tools can be useful, it is equally important to understand the demands of the role. A freelance reporter is a self-employed journalist who provides stories to news organisations that do not employ them on a permanent basis.

In this context, freelancers are often required to pitch story ideas to commissioning editors. Once a proposal is accepted, a fee is agreed upon and the journalist proceeds to complete the assignment[2]. This mode of working allows individuals to choose who they write for, what they write about, and how frequently they work. As long as they can identify stories that are both engaging and of interest to news organisations, freelancers can operate from virtually anywhere.

However, this flexibility comes with significant drawbacks. Permanent employees benefit from greater employment rights than freelancers, whose income is directly tied to their output and the willingness of editors

[1] SPJ, *On Your Own: A Guide to Freelance Journalism*, 2018, https://www.spj.org/freelance-guide.asp (accessed August 8, 2025).

[2] NCTJ, *Freelance Journalism*, 2016, https://www.nctj.com/life-as-a-journalist/freelance/ (accessed August 8, 2025.

to commission their work. If a story proposal is rejected, no payment is received. In addition, freelancers may incur substantial out-of-pocket expenses, as news organisations are often reluctant to cover the costs associated with producing a story.

For these reasons, freelance journalists are particularly vulnerable to work-related stress and burnout. This condition affects many media professionals worldwide, including in Italy. A study published in 2021 in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* highlights this issue: a survey of 292 journalists found a direct correlation between emotional exhaustion and two other dimensions of burnout, namely depersonalisation and reduced personal fulfilment. An inverse relationship was also observed with factors such as workload, control, rewards, community, fairness and values.

A study conducted in Bangladesh identified inadequate support from superiors as a primary source of professional stress, alongside unclear objectives, precarious working conditions, excessive workloads, long working hours and exposure to threats[3].

Stress levels increased further with the onset of COVID-19. A survey entitled *The Journalism and Pandemic*, conducted by the International Center for Journalists in 2021 and involving 2,000 journalists across 145 countries, found that 82% of respondents reported at least one negative emotional or psychological reaction linked to the pandemic. Furthermore, 70% indicated that dealing with the impact of the virus was the most challenging aspect of their work during this period, while 30% stated that their organisations did not provide protective equipment during the first wave.

A survey conducted by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) between late 2020 and early 2021 found that six in ten UK journalists experienced a reduction in income due to the pandemic. Among these, 13% reported losing all their income, while 35% lost more than half. Seventy-two per cent reported redundancies within their organisations, and 85% anticipated further cuts if the crisis continued. These developments had a significant impact on mental health. Research conducted by Middlesex University London found that journalists experienced negative emotions such as anxiety and frustration during the pandemic, alongside a sense of professional pride. However, the lack of interpersonal interaction and

[3] Huda K., Azad A., *Professional Stress in Journalism: A Study on Electronic Media Journalists of Bangladesh*, in *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 2015, vol. 3, pp. 79–88.

social spaces made emotional management more difficult and contributed to a strong sense of isolation[4].

Turning to the Italian context, data collected by the Observatory on Journalism of Agcom (the Authority for Communications Guarantees), based on approximately 2,000 questionnaire responses gathered between 2018 and 2020, indicate that there are currently around 35,000 active journalists in Italy, of whom 39% are freelancers[5].

Over the past two decades, there has been a steady decline in the proportion of journalists under the age of 40, falling from 53% in 2000 to 30% in 2018. During the same period, income levels have also decreased, disproportionately affecting freelancers. On average, 75% of freelance journalists earn less than €5,000 per year. The report describes "an insider–outsider labour market in which employees (the insiders) enjoy greater protection, while other categories of journalists (the outsiders) are compelled to work under precarious and poorly paid conditions".

Younger journalists are particularly disadvantaged: only 28% of those under 35 earn more than €20,000 annually, compared to 57% of those over 55. For this reason, discussions of journalism increasingly invoke the concept of "job insecurity".

Job insecurity encompasses both objective conditions—such as unstable or non-existent contracts—and the subjective perception of the risk of job loss, along with the associated emotional responses. It is a widespread issue across many occupational sectors and has significant implications for mental health. Prolonged exposure to job insecurity can lead to anxiety, sleep disturbances, low self-esteem and depression[6].

Economic insecurity is also closely linked to the phenomenon of frivolous complaints, which are often filed with the sole aim of intimidating and silencing journalists who lack financial resources and legal support.

In 2022, the Ossigeno per l'Informazione Observatory recorded an increase in frivolous complaints and intimidatory defamation lawsuits. The misuse of legal systems to restrict press freedom is not limited to Italy, which led to the formation of the Coalition Against SLAPPs in

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[4] Šimunjak M., *Pride and Anxiety: British Journalists' Emotional Labour in the Covid-19 Pandemic*, in *Journalism Studies*, 2021, vol. 23, n. 3, pp. 320–337.

[5] Agcom, *Documento generico*, 2020, https://www.agcom.it/documents/10179/20594011/Documento+generico+23-11-2020/41f9490a-44bd-4c61-9812-bf721b5c7cfe?version=1.0 (accessed August 8, 2025).

[6] Buoncompagni G., *The Crisis of Journalism and the Health of Journalists*, in *Studies in Media and Communication*, 2024, vol. 2, n. 2, pp. 140–148.

Europe (CASE). The acronym SLAPP stands for "strategic lawsuit against public participation".
Having identified 820 SLAPP cases in Europe between 2010 and 2022, CASE issued an appeal to European institutions in 2023, calling for a robust anti-SLAPP directive and emphasising "the importance and urgency of strong legislative measures capable of providing effective protection at both national and international levels".

2. Methodology

The research employed a qualitative and creative social research methodology, incorporating techniques such as focus groups and art therapy. This approach involved unstructured interviews alongside expressive practices using artistic materials, including painting and drawing.
Creative methods are process-based approaches that involve the production of artefacts, including digital artefacts, and are particularly useful for integrating everyday and performative practices into research projects. These methods acknowledge and validate the knowledge and experiences of individuals outside traditional academic contexts, fostering collaborative and dialogical processes in data production[7].
Art therapy, in this context, draws on a psychological instrument known as the individualised "projective test", through which participants express emotions, personality traits, relationships, communication styles and internal conflicts by projecting themselves through two channels: verbal and graphic. This enables participants to articulate experiences and emotions in multiple ways within a professional research setting.
As part of the study, the drawings produced by interviewees and focus group participants were analysed using an approach derived from art therapy, specifically through qualitative interpretation techniques based on symbolic and narrative analysis of images[8]. Interpretation was conducted from an exploratory and communicative perspective rather than a diagnostic one, focusing on understanding the meanings attributed by the authors to their drawings. Participants were invited to comment on and explain their visual outputs, allowing the visual data to be triangulated with the verbal data generated during interviews and group discussions.

[7] Giorgi A., Pizzolati M., Vacchelli E., *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2021.
[8] Guillemin M. *Understanding illness: using drawings as a research method*, in *Qual Health Res.* 2004 Feb;14(2):272-89

This approach enabled the drawings to be treated as forms of symbolic narration, capable of expressing emotions, perceptions and experiences that may be difficult to articulate verbally. In this way, visual analysis complemented and enriched the data collected through traditional qualitative research methods.

The participating journalists took turns responding to questions and engaging in open discussion, drawing on insights that emerged through interaction with colleagues and the researcher. However, only some participants agreed to produce drawings representing their emotional state at the time and their perception of being a journalist today.

Four online focus groups were conducted via Google Meet, each consisting of five participants, between April and June 2024. Efforts were made to maintain gender balance within each group. The discussions focused on two main dimensions: socio-economic conditions and professional insecurity. Journalists were recruited through an online registration form distributed via email, through which they provided contact details and biographical information. The form also outlined the aims and procedures of the research and guaranteed participant anonymity in the dissemination phase. Participation was entirely voluntary.

Participants were pre-selected online and contacted via their websites, social media profiles or affiliated newspapers. Preliminary socio-demographic data indicated that all interviewees were Italian, aged between 29 and 38, and held degrees in humanities-related disciplines, including economics, science policy, communication, and foreign languages and literature.

Two key dimensions emerged from the focus group discussions and are central to the present analysis: (1) the socio-economic dimension, relating to precarious employment conditions and their psycho-emotional impact; and (2) the dimension of occupational risk and insecurity, along with the associated psychophysical consequences.

In the discussion of the results, selected drawings submitted by participants via the online form will be included in order to complement the interview data with visual material reflecting the themes that emerged.

3. Discussion of the Results

According to recent Italian research conducted by Irpimedia, the following data illustrate the psychosocial and professional conditions of

freelance journalists. Overall, 87% of respondents reported experiencing stress, 73% anxiety, and 68% feelings of inadequacy[9].
More than half reported suffering from insomnia. One in two participants felt misunderstood and experienced intense loneliness. Furthermore, 42% reported symptoms of burnout, including unprovoked outbursts of anger and forms of dependency on the internet and social media. One in three respondents explicitly referred to depression.
In addition, 28% reported a loss of appetite or disordered eating patterns, 27% experienced panic attacks, and 26% reported difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships. Fifteen per cent stated that they had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Notably, only 2% indicated that they had never experienced any of these conditions.
It is also significant to consider the responses provided in the "other" category, where several participants reported issues related to alcohol, tobacco or drug use.
Taking this national context into account, and in light of the categories outlined above, six online focus groups were organised. At the end of each session, participants were invited to submit a drawing representing their emotional state and their perception of journalism at that particular moment.
This approach strengthened the methodological framework of the study, allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationship between the economic conditions, risks and insecurities associated with journalism, and the emotional wellbeing of professionals.

3.1 The Socio-economic Dimension

S. and N. are just two examples of the many freelance journalists living on the edge of economic and professional instability:

"Newspaper articles are paid less and less, and collaborations rarely offer the continuity needed to provide any certainty about the future (…) I felt overwhelmed by pressures coming from multiple directions: from the editor-in-chief waiting for the article, and from the need to pay rent and bills. During this period, I abused drugs and coffee; I could not sleep and suffered from tachycardia and gastritis" (S.).

[9] Irpimedia, *"Come ti senti"*, 2023, https://irpimedia.irpi.eu/cometisenti/ (accessed June 10, 2025).

"For years I worked without being paid. I started as an intern at a local newspaper, covering petty crime and court cases. Everything seemed to happen in that city (…) I found myself in dangerous situations several times and was threatened" (N.).

Another interviewee explained that, at the onset of the pandemic, he could no longer sustain his living costs and was forced to return to his parents' home. This situation led to the breakdown of his relationship and made it increasingly difficult to meet professional deadlines:

"Personal problems affected my clarity at work (…) During COVID-19, I found myself working continuously for two days and then having an entire week without any assignments. I was constantly waiting for emails from editors-in-chief or for payments, which were rarely made on time" (A.).

The sense of insecurity is further exacerbated by the lack of responses from editors to emails containing proposals for collaborations or ideas for articles, photo assignments or video content (see Figs. 1–2). As highlighted in the theoretical framework, uncertainty surrounding remuneration remains a central issue. In many countries, newspapers clearly outline submission guidelines, editorial contacts and payment rates on their websites. In Italy, however, financial transparency in this regard remains limited[10].

The *Freelance Peephole* project represents the first initiative in Italy to create a public database aimed at increasing transparency regarding freelance pay rates, based on reports from journalists themselves. Since May 2022, more than 180 contributions have been collected. Data from the platform indicate that an online article for *Corriere della Sera* is paid €15 gross, €5 for *Giornale di Sicilia*, €14 for *Gazzetta dello Sport*, and as little as €1.50 for a five-line agency introduction for *Italpress*.

As confirmed by participants in this study, payments are often delayed by several months, and in some cases are never made at all.

"Being a journalist today is an elite profession. It is not simply a question of ethics, technology or multidisciplinary skills. It is a profession tied to inequality and economic access: if you have financial support, you can build a career in journalism. Otherwise, it is impossible to work with stability and peace of mind" (E.).

For journalists working in crime or political reporting, the pace is relentless, leaving little or no time for rest. Availability is often expected

[10] Buoncompagni G., *The Crisis of Journalism and the Health of Journalists*, in *Studies in Media and Communication*, 2024, vol. 2, n. 2, pp. 140–148.

around the clock, including weekends, making it extremely difficult to maintain a balance between professional and private life. According to the *Precariometro* survey conducted by the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI) between 2021 and 2022, 15% of the 266 precarious journalists surveyed reported working more than 50 hours per week.

As a result, freelancers are often forced either to adapt to these conditions or to find alternative strategies for survival, such as taking on additional jobs or sacrificing their personal time. These dynamics have significant consequences for professional identity and self-perception.

"Of course, I am not only a journalist to make ends meet—and I am not ashamed to say it. I also work in the social sector and help high school students with their homework privately. However, in journalism, those who remain fully within the news sector and maintain a certain professional level are valued more than those who also work in press offices or communication roles, even temporarily. Freelancers are outcasts compared to newsroom staff; they are second-class journalists" (C.).

Low pay is increasingly driving the hybridisation of journalism with other professions. Many journalists take on roles in press offices or communication departments within public and private institutions, where there is greater access to middle- and high-income brackets and less professional and personal instability[11].

However, this hybridisation may also expose journalists to forms of pressure or conflict of interest, with potential implications for the functioning and stability of democratic systems. For this reason, the Italian Permanent Centre for Journalism has recently established a working group that will produce a report on the condition of freelance journalists in Italy in the coming months.

Despite the economic crisis affecting the publishing sector, the external image of journalism remains largely unchanged. The profession continues to be perceived as prestigious and associated with an elite status and certain privileges. Journalists are often expected to perform this image publicly—on television programmes, at festivals and during public events—where projecting success remains important.

Maintaining this façade, however, becomes increasingly difficult in the face of growing precarity and declining remuneration.

[11] Splendore S., *Sociologia del giornalismo*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2023.

Figure 1. Overwork, contracts note

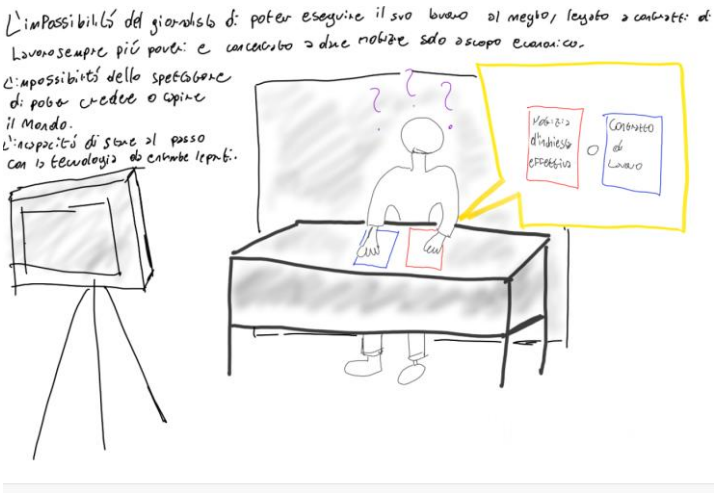

Figure 2. Psycho-emotional disturbances

3.2 Dimension of Insecurity and Professional Risk

Economic conditions are not the only factor contributing to the difficulties freelance journalists face in practising their profession consistently and effectively. Those who report on sensitive issues such as organised crime, terrorism, corruption and illegal trafficking are exposed

to heightened professional risks and insecurity. While covering such topics may lead to higher remuneration and public recognition, it also entails significant personal danger.

Interviewees acknowledged the particular difficulty of reporting on crime and micro-violence within their own local contexts. In such cases, the risk of retaliation is considerable, and there appears to be little or no protection from employers. Some participants reported receiving intimidating messages, anonymous late-night phone calls requesting information about their sources, and threats against their property.

"Some friends and colleagues who work in newsrooms did not believe me. After I had interviewed members of a local gang, my phone was bombarded with anonymous calls, and the walls of my garage were covered with graffiti" (B.).

"I am very passionate about crime and legal reporting. If you do a good job, you gain recognition. However, if something goes wrong, or if you are filmed on a mobile phone or targeted by rumours online, you are exposed to serious risks. It then becomes extremely difficult to obtain physical, financial or legal protection in the event of harm to oneself or one's property" (S.).

The rise of the internet and social media has further intensified these risks. Journalists who engage in public debate are increasingly exposed to hate speech, online harassment and cyberstalking[12]. A recent survey conducted by IrpiMedia, based on an anonymous questionnaire administered to 558 journalists, provides empirical support for these concerns.

Overall, 28% of respondents stated that threats significantly affected their mental health, while 19% reported that the dangers associated with fieldwork had a comparable impact. These figures are notably higher among video-makers and photojournalists: 43% reported being affected by the risks of fieldwork, and 40% by threats. Online abuse was also identified as a major issue, with 33% of respondents considering it a threat to their psychological wellbeing. This percentage rises to 44% among contracted staff (such as editors and publishers) and to 39% among female journalists.

Several testimonies collected during the research further illustrate these risks:

"I was attacked by taxi drivers during a demonstration outside Palazzo Chigi."

[12] Ziccardi G., *Online Political Hate Speech in Europe: The Rise of New Extremisms*, EE Publishing, Northampton, 2020.

"I risked being assaulted by a group of far-right activists at a funeral."
"I was nearly attacked simply for asking legitimate questions about a news story."
"I was verbally and physically abused by a politician."
These accounts highlight that journalism—particularly field reporting—can be a dangerous profession. Operating in unsafe environments, constantly assessing potential threats and questioning whether certain lines of inquiry may provoke retaliation can have a significant impact on mental health[13].
The final document of the first phase of the public consultation *Information System*, published by Agcom in 2018, explicitly identifies the issue of intimidation against journalists, ranging from traditional threats to new forms of online harassment. Obstacles to the free flow of information also include frivolous lawsuits, which are particularly serious as they may undermine freedom of expression, especially in relation to issues of public interest, such as organised crime. Freelance journalists, who are generally less well paid and less protected by insurance, appear to be particularly vulnerable (see Figs. 3 and 4).
Journalists who receive threats and are considered to be at risk may be granted police protection; however, such measures are often temporary and not always sufficient:
"When I reported on officials involved in human trafficking in Libya, it was undoubtedly one of the most difficult moments of my career. I had lived in Libya for four years—it was my home. That investigation felt like starting from zero" (N.).
During the pandemic, this journalist participated in the six-month *Journalists in Residence Milano* programme, organised by Q Code in partnership with OBCT (OBC Transeuropa) and funded by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom. The initiative was designed to provide threatened journalists with a safe environment in which to rest and recover, while continuing their investigative work under safer conditions.
Working in crisis areas, conflict zones or in contact with criminal actors can have significant economic implications and may also adversely affect both physical and mental health[14]. Experiences such as physical assault,

[13] Irpimedia, *"Come ti senti"*, 2023, https://irpimedia.irpi.eu/cometisenti/ (accessed August 8, 2025).
[14] Newman E., Madrigal I., Hight J., *The Inconsistency of Trauma-Related Journalism Education Goals and Instruction*, in *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 2023, vol. 78, n. 2, pp. 165–182.

coercion or deprivation can trigger traumatic responses. Humans typically respond to danger through "fight or flight" mechanisms; however, when neither response is possible, the mind may resort to a more primitive defensive state: shutdown[15].

This response has been described in neuroscientific theory as the activation of the "reptilian brain", a concept introduced by Paul MacLean. In such cases, the body may freeze and the individual may experience dissociation, as though detached from the situation. From an evolutionary perspective, this response may function as a survival mechanism, as predators may abandon prey perceived as lifeless.

This helps explain why traumatic experiences often result in memory fragmentation or gaps, as the mind distances itself from emotionally overwhelming events. Such responses are characteristic of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition that develops following exposure to traumatic experiences. First systematically studied in the United States in relation to veterans of the Vietnam War, PTSD can affect individuals of all ages, including not only direct victims but also witnesses and those indirectly exposed to trauma[16].

In addition to the psychological burden of reporting on distressing events, freelance journalists often receive limited institutional support. Editors may fail to monitor remote work adequately or provide guarantees of publication, further exacerbating professional insecurity:

"As a freelance correspondent, I was in Afghanistan in spring 2021, before the Taliban's return and the withdrawal of US forces (…) At a certain point, the publisher withdrew from publishing several articles and photographs that had already been agreed upon, citing dissatisfaction and increased costs, including insurance, food, accommodation and the later involvement of a colleague" (M.).

[15] Feinstein A., Owen J., Blair N., *A Hazardous Profession: War, Journalists, and Psychopathology*, in *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 2015, vol. 172, n. 1, pp. 85–90.

[16] Newman E., Madrigal I., Hight J., *The Inconsistency of Trauma-Related Journalism Education Goals and Instruction*, in *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 2023, vol. 78, n. 2, pp. 165–182.

Figure 3. Full

Figure 4. Risks to truth

4. Conclusion

Today's journalists operate under considerable pressure. The relentless news cycle exposes reporters and editors to repeated forms of trauma, while the future of the news industry—particularly at the local level—remains uncertain. Online harassment, especially targeting women and journalists from minority backgrounds, represents a significant and growing concern.

Journalism, and freelance journalism in particular, plays a crucial social and institutional role in narrating reality, interpreting events and acting as

a bridge between political institutions and citizens. However, this function can obscure two major forms of trauma that affect information professionals and compromise their ability to practise journalism effectively: economic and security-related trauma, both of which impact the mind and body.

In this paper, the term "economic trauma" refers to the chronic psychological stress generated by job insecurity, contractual instability and the perception of financial uncertainty. This is not trauma in the clinical sense, but rather a persistent condition that may produce anxiety, stress and a sense of vulnerability, as highlighted in the work of Standing and Vosko on labour precarity.

By contrast, "security trauma" refers to acute, potentially destabilising events, understood in a clinical sense. These may arise from direct exposure to dangerous, violent or threatening situations encountered in the course of journalistic work. Unlike economic trauma, this form involves a rupture in everyday professional activity and may trigger acute stress reactions associated with post-traumatic disorders.

Distinguishing between these two forms of trauma allows for a better understanding of both the cumulative, structural impact of economic insecurity on psychological wellbeing and the immediate, potentially clinical effects of threats to personal safety.

The term "trauma" derives from the Greek *trauma*, meaning "wound". In medical terms, it refers to a bodily injury caused by a sudden and violent agent, while in psychological terms it denotes a disturbance resulting from a significant emotional event. Potentially traumatic experiences include war, physical or sexual violence, imprisonment, kidnapping and natural disasters.

Importantly, trauma may also arise through indirect exposure. Journalists who are not directly involved in traumatic events may still be affected through the processing of distressing material—such as videos, photographs or testimonies of victims and survivors. This phenomenon is known as "vicarious trauma". In such cases, individuals do not experience the event firsthand but are nonetheless emotionally affected through empathetic engagement and identification with the traumatic situation.

According to the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, between 80% and 100% of journalists have experienced a work-related traumatic event, with approximately 92% reporting multiple exposures. This is particularly relevant for freelance journalists, who often work in isolation and have limited opportunities for peer interaction or institutional support.

Although this study is based on a local context and a specific sample within a defined timeframe, it highlights a broader crisis affecting

freelance journalism. Within the group analysed, this crisis has a pronounced impact on physical, psychological and professional wellbeing. These challenges are often under-recognised and insufficiently discussed, both privately and publicly.

Such conditions may also affect journalistic practice itself, potentially influencing the objectivity of information gathering and the management of sources, as well as weakening the relationship between journalists and an audience that is already increasingly disengaged from contemporary media.

As suggested by Tyson and Abdalla, several measures could be implemented to support journalists' mental health, including access to free or subsidised psychotherapy, peer support groups, stress management workshops, trauma processing training and services for victims of violence and harassment. However, such resources remain largely unavailable in Italy[17].

Opportunities for professional exchange and dialogue are limited, and news organisations rarely provide psychological support to their staff or freelance collaborators. As a result, journalists may find it difficult to acknowledge and address experiences of distress or vulnerability.

In Italy, the National Order of Journalists offers certain forms of support, such as legal assistance, but does not currently provide structured mental health services. In response to an enquiry by IrpiMedia, the national leadership clarified that direct healthcare provision does not fall within the statutory responsibilities of the Order. Nevertheless, the institution remains attentive to the challenges facing the profession, particularly those affecting freelancers and self-employed journalists.

The Order also engages in dialogue with other professional bodies, such as Casagit, which provides healthcare services, including some forms of psychological support. However, only certain Casagit Salute plans cover psychotherapy costs—typically up to an annual limit—and these are generally available only to journalists with formal employment contracts. Freelancers, by contrast, are excluded from these benefits.

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[17] Tyson G., Wild J., *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms among Journalists Repeatedly Covering COVID-19 News*, in *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2021, vol. 18, art. 8536.
Abdalla S.M., Cohen G.H., Tamrakar S., Koya S.F., Galea S., *Media Exposure and the Risk of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Following a Mass Traumatic Event: An In-silico Experiment*, in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 2021, vol. 12, art. 674263

While freelance professionals may subscribe to "open" health plans available to a broader range of workers, none of these schemes currently include coverage for psychological consultations.

ADAPT International Network

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