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Research: Stress and trauma among media workers in Macedonia during the refugees crises

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Intro

- With this research we want to answer what are the need of journalist, both local and foreign ,who cover the refugee crises on border between Macedonia and Greece
- The research specifically refers to the migrant crisis in Macedonia, involving 18 local journalists and 30 foreign, from the Macedonian and Greek sides.
- Period of research was April –June 2015
- Journalists answer on 10 question related to their work, conditions, stress and access to official information



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What are your challenges that you feel a reporter when you cover immigration?

- Immigration coverage has grown in importance as the immigrant-rights movement has adopted the framework and tactics of the historical civil rights movement for racial equality
 - But it must be noted that journalists know very little the issues ...
 - Of the interviewed journalists, 12 local journalists first met with refugees, 4 covered a refugee crisis as correspondents, while 2 photo reporters witnessed the crisis in Turkey and Greece ...
 - By foreign journalists, most of them have experience of reporting conflicts

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What types of problems journalists are exposed covering the refugee crises?

- **30%** of the interviewed journalists did not have access to public information;
- The biggest problem was obtaining permission to monitor the refugee crisis
- **lacking** adequate infrastructure for media workers
- **lack of proper psychological support** (12 journalists asked for, but did not have anywhere to receive)

Did you feel stress covering refugee crises?

- Almost all 48 journalists feel stress by covering refugee crises...They identified the three most pressing events during reporting
 - The greatest stress experienced by journalists when dead bodies were found in the immediate vicinity of Veles
 - Second stress journalists and photo reporters witnessed when a 10 year old child went through his mother
 - Third stress was when the border between Macedonia and Greece was closed and the fugitives were sewing their lips ...

6 What are the factors that may place journalists at risk for psychological distress

- Journalists were under stress because of:
 - - direct contact with refugees **(20 journalists)**
 - - direct testimony of the suffering of children and women **(12 journalists)**
 - - direct confrontation with the police **(6 journalists)**
- Here we have **secondary victimization, psychological stress, fear of strangers** and **identification** with the main protagonists of the crisis



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Have you asked for psychological support and when?

- **Only 3** of the local journalists have confirmed that they have sought counsel from an expert, and **all three are female**,
- while **12 foreign journalists** have confirmed that they regularly visit a psychiatrist **before** leaving to report from conflicting environments ...

What journalists cover?

- First of all these is unprecedented Event
- domestic terror threats,
- stories in challenging, but non-conflict areas,
- locations of post-conflict or humanitarian crisis

“For sure, you’re keeping your journalistic integrity, you’re not changing history,” he says, but “the problem is there is so much grey”, say Greek journalist Will Vassilopoulos...

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The impact of covering these events to media workers?

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder** (PTSD)
- **Major depression** at one end of the spectrum to heightened **emotional distress** that falls short of a psychiatric diagnosis at the other.

But anyway

- **Clear** recognition that the trauma experienced by journalists as **witnesses** could never be equated with the suffering endured by the migrants.

What is the access to official information?

- All asked journalists responded that face unfeasible conditions for information, lack access to official persons and are left alone to face the crisis and the problems, hardships and sufferings that the migrants themselves are facing.

What problems were most commonly encountered?

- Most journalists say that their language barrier was hardest, as well as inaccessibility to the paths that migrants moved ...
- But many journalists, mostly local, responded that the biggest problem was reporting children's suffering

How negatively the crisis response is affected?

According the answers

- More than 30 journalist confirmed that they feel moral injury
 - Journalists are often first responders to a trauma scene and it is this proximity to events that can become, for some, a very significant stress...
 - There often answer were:
 - I saw things that were morally wrong.
 - I am troubled by having witnessed others' immoral acts.
 - I acted in ways that violated my own moral code or values.
 - I am troubled by having acted in ways that violated my own morals and values.
 - I violated my own morals by failing to do something that I felt I should have done.
 - I am troubled because I violated my morals by failing to do something that I felt I should have done.

Conclusions:

- journalists are target of traumatic stress and that they need psychological distress.
- Photo-reporters were under heavy stress from reporters
- journalists frequently bear witness to human suffering whether covering mass disasters or individual atrocities
- little is known regarding the impact of such exposure on the well-being of journalists