

UK social work study explores impact of COVID-19 on journalists

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Fast-paced and deadline-driven—two phrases that are often used to describe the demanding world of news.

The challenges facing TV [journalists](#) are unique.

They're exposed to traumatic events and experience a lack of resources due to budget restraints. On top of that, add the stressors that accompany a global pandemic.

To learn more about the impact of COVID-19 on TV journalists, researchers in the College of Social Work (CoSW) Self-Care Lab at the University of Kentucky conducted a [national study](#).

"We know that journalists face a host of challenges and associated consequences, such as professional burnout, in the work that they do," Jay Miller, dean of the CoSW, said. "With this study, we wanted to critically examine how COVID-19 has impacted the [self-care](#) of journalists, and perhaps more importantly, learn how we may better support journalists."

The study zeroed in on two forms of self-care practices—personal and professional.

In total, 1,941 TV journalists from various backgrounds provided information and answered questions through an electronic survey.

Approximately 56% of participants had been working remotely since the beginning of the pandemic. And 93% indicated they have covered stories related to COVID-19.

Further results revealed, the majority of participants engaged in moderate levels of self-care before the pandemic, but their self-care routines significantly decreased during COVID-19.

Of note, professional self-care scores were lower than personal—meaning the participants view their professional environment

differently and, possibly, less conducive to self-care.

"Findings from this study are very clear," Miller continued. "COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the self-care practices of television journalists."

In addition to showing significant decreases in self-care practices, results from the study show that self-care for journalists may be impacted by finances, physical health and mental health.

Burnout, a term first coined by American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger in 1975, describes what happens when a person becomes increasingly inoperative. As symptoms worsen, its effects can turn more serious.

So what can be done to increase self-care and reduce burnout among TV journalists?

The study has a few suggestions, which are outlined below:

- **Promote the Value of Self-Care:** Companies and organizations that employ television journalists should adopt professional practice standards and ethical guidelines that explicitly reference the essential nature of self-care.
- **Train/Educate About Self-Care:** Self-care is a practice that can be learned. Academic programs should consider making self-care a part of coursework for journalism students. Also, employers and professional membership organizations may look to offer courses surrounding best self-care practices.
- **Implement Systemic Responses:** Employers have an important role in fostering employee well-being, which includes self-care. Companies and organizations should have policies, practices, and procedures that make self-care more likely.

- Support Self-Care Research: Ongoing assessment is vital to understanding workplace conditions. It is important to support and conduct research about self-care and other wellness activities.

"Let's face it, we, as a society, depend on journalists to ensure that we have access to timely, accurate information. For some, getting that information, or not, can have profound consequences," Miller explained. "As such, we must ensure that journalists are supported in the work that they do—that includes fostering work environments conducive to practicing self-care."

Provided by University of Kentucky

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