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## The Level of Burnout Among Palestinian Media Professionals in the West Bank, Palestine

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### Abstract

*This study aims to identify the level of burnout among Palestinian media professionals in West Bank. It also aims to focus on the role of different factors such as gender, experience, and academic qualifications on their level of burnout. The Methodology of this study: A descriptive analytical approach was used, using the Burnout Scale as a study tool. The study sample consisted of (182) Palestinian media professionals in the West Bank, selected using a stratified random sampling method. Results: The results showed an average response to the main question. Average scores were recorded in all areas, with the highest score in promotion and development, and the lowest score in the area of anger management. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences attributable to gender and qualifications, while there were statistically significant differences attributable to the experience variable in favor of the age group (11-15 years). Conclusion: Despite the importance of burnout, there are insufficient studies in Palestine. This study emphasizes the need to provide journalists with information about the concept of burnout, its causes, sources, and how to deal with it. The results indicate the need to provide psychological counseling to media professionals to treat its symptoms and disorders.*

**Keywords:** Burnout, Media Professionals, West Bank Governorates, Palestine.

### Introduction

Journalism is one of the most important and pioneering professions in the world, documenting history and establishing facts. Despite the dangers of its work, it is fraught with difficulties, challenges, and obstacles. Journalists are exposed to various forms of harm, even death. Journalists face great confusion when covering "events," seeking accurate information and describing the lived reality of crises and traumas experienced by society and journalists themselves.

Instead of the fear that haunts journalists as a result of their exposure to physical, psychological, moral, or political attacks, journalists possess a resolute personality that enables them to take the initiative and cover these events, despite the accompanying danger and anxiety. The threat to which journalists are exposed as a result of publishing news or media statements that may not please certain parties (which may expose suspects, violations, or corruption cases) exposes them to danger and causes them severe distress and anxiety, which quickly impacts their personal lives. The increase in crises, shocks, conflicts, wars, regional changes and equations, and economic and technological acceleration lead to a lack of a sense of security and psychological instability, which increases psychological disorders, anxiety, and stress. Depression and other psychological problems have become widespread worldwide, so much so that this era has come

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to be described as an era of accelerating psychological pressure (Higan, 1998). Globally, the forms and types of psychological pressure have multiplied and diversified, creating a great deal of psychological suffering among media professionals, which may lead to an imbalance in the factors and components of mental health resulting from working in media professions (Khattak et al., 2023). The phenomenon of psychological pressure experienced by media professionals is one of the most important phenomena receiving attention at both the individual and societal levels. The issue of psychological pressure is almost an issue of the era in which contemporary people live, whether in developed or developing societies (Radwan and Al-Shaiba, 2000). When media professionals are exposed to the sources and causes of psychological burnout, they suffer from imbalance and instability, their strength weakens, and their desire and motivation to achieve decline. They reach a stage where they need to confront and address the challenges and obstacles resulting from changes in the profession. They lose their sense of engaging in discussions and listening to the positive aspects related to the profession, and reach a stage of denial, rejecting any modern methods or means in media work (Al-Dhafari and Al-Qaryouti, 2008).

Recently, it is globally acknowledged that the sources and causes of burnout have increased, occupying a significant space in the field of humanitarian professions, most notably journalism and media. This is a relatively new concept, and Freudenberg was among the first to use the concept of burnout because it affects professionals who face obstacles that prevent them from performing their professional duties to the fullest. This creates a sense of inadequacy and inability to perform their work to the required standard. This often results in psychological pressure, which the journalist is forced to adapt to in order to reduce their sense of helplessness (Joy, 2001).

Burnout is defined as: a psychological phenomenon resulting from the work pressures individuals are exposed to, which negatively impacts the individual, the institution, and society due to a decline in the individual's performance and productivity. It has three dimensions: (emotional) tension, emotional numbness, and a lack of a sense of accomplishment. Burnout goes through three stages: The feeling of pressure resulting from an imbalance between the demands of the job and the individual's abilities to accomplish it, which causes emotional reactions to the imbalance, leading the individual to feel anxious, tired, and tense. This is followed by a stage of changes in the individual's attitudes and behavior, leading to a lack of self-commitment and a diminished sense of responsibility for work. (Al-Rabi' and Al-Jarh, 2009).

## **Methodology**

To achieve the study's objectives, the researcher used the descriptive-analytical approach, which describes the phenomenon under study.

## **Study Population**

The study population consists of approximately (400) male and female journalists in the West Bank, according to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate.

## **Study Sample**

The study sample consisted of (182) Palestinian media professionals in the West Bank, comprising (84) male journalists and (98) female journalists.

## Study Tools

The researcher developed a scale for burnout among Palestinian journalists to collect the necessary data to measure burnout among media professionals. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 72.5. The scale aims to determine the degree of burnout experienced by each media professional in the sample in each of the four dimensions of the scale: (risk and stress / anger management / influential media / progress and development).

## Study Limitations

**Objective Limitations:** The study is limited to studying burnout among Palestinian media professionals in the West Bank. **Spatial Limitations:** This study was conducted on Palestinian media professionals in the West Bank.

## Timeframe

The study was conducted in 2024, i.e., after the October 7, 2023 war.

## Study Sample Limitations

The study was limited to a random sample of media professionals.

## Methodological Limitations

The researcher relied on the descriptive analytical approach.

## Research Tool Limitations

The study relied on a burnout questionnaire prepared by the researcher after verifying its validity and standardization.

## Statistical Methods Used

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to verify the validity of the burnout scale.

## Results and Conclusions

Presentation and analysis of the results of the first question: What is the level of burnout among media professionals in the West Bank?

To answer this question, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages were extracted for the questionnaire's items and dimensions. Table 1 below shows the results.

Response rate	standard deviation	Average response*	Dimension	Dimension number	Rank
High	.40	3.25	:The fourth dimension advancement and development	3	4
Medium	.35	3.21	:The third dimension Influential media professionals	4	1
Medium	.42	3.11	Dimension 1: Risk and Stress	1	2
Medium	.43	2.92	:The second dimension Anger management	2	3

<b>Medium</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>Total score</b>		
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Table (1)

shows the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the burnout dimensions.

Maximum score for paragraph (5)

Table 2 shows that the level of burnout among media professionals in the West Bank was estimated to be between high and medium. Thus, the total score for all dimensions (average) was estimated at (3.12) with a standard deviation of (0.28). The highest-rated dimension was the fourth dimension: (progression and development), with an average of (3.25) and a standard deviation of (0.40). This was followed by the third dimension: Influential media professionals, with an average of (3.21) and a standard deviation of (0.35). The first dimension: Risk and stress came in third place with (3.11) and a standard deviation of (0.42). The lowest-rated dimension was the second dimension: Anger management, with an average of (2.92) and a standard deviation of (0.43). Presentation and analysis of the results of the first study hypothesis, which states that there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the arithmetic means of the level of burnout attributed to the gender variable. To answer this question, a t-test was used for two independent samples, and the following argument illustrates this:

Significance level	T	deviation	Average	number	Sex	Dimensions
.266	1.115	.25559	3.1463	84	male	Total score
		.29338	3.1013	101	feminine	

Table (2)

Results of the t-test for two independent groups for differences for the gender variable:

Statistically significant at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).

The table above shows no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the responses between the arithmetic means of the level of burnout among media professionals in the West Bank attributable to the gender variable on the total score. The significance level for the (t) values on this was greater than (0.05), and thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

Presentation and analysis of the results of the second hypothesis: which states that there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level  $< 0.05$  between the arithmetic means of the level of burnout attributable to the experience variable.

To test the hypothesis, an independent samples test was used, and the results were as shown in the following table 3.

Significance level	value (f)	mean squares	degrees of freedom	Sum of squares of deviation	Source of variance	Dimensions
.000	6,250	.442	3	1.326	Between	

					groups	Total score
		.071	181	12,796	Within groups	
			184	14.122	the total	

Table No. (3)

Results of a one-way analysis of variance for the significance of sample differences according to the experience variable:

Table (4) shows that there were statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the level of burnout attributed to the experience variable on the total score, as the significance level for the (F) values was greater than (0.05), and thus the hypothesis was rejected. To determine in whose favor these differences were, the (L.S.D.) test was used, and Table (4) shows the results.

Significance level	16-20 year	1 5- 11 years	6-10 years	Less than 5 years		burnout
.277	-.13238-	-.22281-*	-.05830-		Less than years 5	
.000						
.061						
.001	-.07408-	-.16450-*			6-10 years	
.247						
.175	.09043				1 5- 11 years	
					16-20 years	

Table (4)

Results of the L.S.D. test for the significance of differences according to the sample variable

Table (5) shows that there are differences in the level of psychological burnout among media professionals in the governorates of the West Bank, based on the experience variable. The differences were observed between those with less than 5 years of experience and those with 11–15 years of experience, in favor of the 11–15 years group. Additionally, differences were also found between those with 6–10 years and those with 11–15 years of experience, again in favor of the 11–15 years group.

Presentation and analysis of the third hypothesis, which states that there are no statistically significant differences at the significance level  $< \alpha 0.05$  between the arithmetic means of the level of .Burnout is attributed to the variable of educational qualification

One Way ANOVA test for independent samples was used and the results were as shown in the following table

Significance level	value (f)	mean squares	degrees of freedom	Sum of squares of deviation	Source of variance	Dimensions
.785	.356	.028	3	.083	Between groups	Total score
		.078	181	14,039	Within groups	
			184	14.122	the total	

Table (5)

Results of one-way analysis of variance for the significance of sample-specific differences according to the educational qualification variable

Table (5) shows that there are statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the level of burnout attributed to the educational qualification variable on the total score, as the significance level for the (F) values on it was greater than (0.05), and thus the hypothesis is rejected.

## Discussion of the Results and Recommendations:

### Discussion of the Results:

Table (5) shows that the level of burnout among media professionals in the West Bank was estimated to be between high and medium. Thus, the total score for all dimensions (average) was estimated at (3.12) with a standard deviation of (0.28). The highest-rated dimension was the fourth dimension: (Advancement and Development), with an average of (3.25) and a standard deviation of (0.40). This was followed by the third dimension: Influential Media Professionals, with an average of (3.21) and a standard deviation of (0.35). The first dimension: Risk and Stress came in third place with an average of (3.11) and a standard deviation of (0.42). The lowest-rated dimension was the second dimension: Anger Management, with an average of (2.92) and a standard deviation of (0.43). When discussing the results of the dimensions, we find that the fourth dimension received the highest rating: (advancement and development). This indicates the importance and necessity of advancing and raising the level of media professionalism in the West Bank, and working to develop it to be on par with neighboring countries, rising to the highest levels of appreciation from official and public bodies for its importance in building state institutions. This leaves us at the halfway point, searching for the elements of strength that achieved this result. It compels us to examine the reasons that have hindered some media professionals from achieving the creativity, advancement, and advancement of the media profession we hoped for. If we ask media professionals about their morale (their level of motivation) to continue working in journalism and media, despite the magnitude of the risks they face, we find them divided into two groups, halfway there: one group that remains persevering, and another that regrets joining this profession due to its difficulties and hardships. This is especially true given that the majority of those on the path are continuing their journey, and their affiliation with the media profession is advanced. Their motivations are not personal, but rather stem from a sense of national duty, a love of the profession, and a determination to preserve the national heritage of Palestinian society. This study is consistent with Kryshtanovych et al.'s (2022) study, which sought to identify the main ways that limit employee creativity in educational institutions in Ukraine and to understand the causes of burnout.

When discussing the second dimension, "Influential Media Professionals," we find that the

results focused heavily on the roles of media professionals, considering them the "fifth estate." They are a profession that influences and changes people's lives and shapes their prospects through their leadership and influence on influential decision-makers. They constitute a tremendous force of pressure on decision-makers. Due to their media coverage of various societal, economic, political, security, legal, social, and psychological issues, they connect citizens with officials, emulating their concerns and grievances, empathizing with their hopes and aspirations, and helping to improve their living conditions. Given that this dimension's score is "medium," they (the media professionals, I mean) influence and are influenced like other sectors of society. They are an integral part of the social fabric. What pleases and delights them, or saddens and angers them, extends to all people, if more so than the rest of us. This is especially true given that they are more knowledgeable and aware of many crucial issues that the general public is unaware of. The medium score indicates that media professionals are influential in society, with regard to its issues, concerns, and rights. Some of them have reached advanced political, social, and even economic levels. This study agreed with Backholm and Idas's (2015) study, which highlighted the psychological effects on media professionals when covering traumatic events, murders, and mass shootings. It also overlapped with Helen Bredart's (2017) study, titled "Burnout among Journalists: A Symptom of Newsroom Discontent," which impacted journalists' working conditions and well-being at work. It also agreed with Kara Chen and Anke Hewang's (2015) study, which aimed to measure the level of burnout among media professionals in Hong Kong, particularly in the fields of journalism, public relations, and advertising. It also overlapped with Al-Auri's (2015) study, which aimed to examine the level of psychological stress and social isolation experienced by media professionals in Palestine. When discussing the first dimension: (risk and stress), it came in third place in appreciation among media professionals in the West Bank. Compared to the fields of work in the Gaza Strip in the study from which this study was drawn, we find that the amount of risk and effort undertaken by media professionals in the Gaza Strip is greater, especially since the suffering, pain and torment that media professionals are exposed to as a result of covering events, destruction, killing, demolition, burning, displacement, loss, hunger, poverty and the horrific general scene resulting from the October 7, 2023 war. He exerts an effort that reaches many times that of media professionals in the West Bank. Despite all of this, the results indicate that media professionals are vigilant and highly prepared, enabling them to maintain professional balance, social competence, and psychological adjustment and adaptation to events. A large number of them, or their loved ones, have been subjected to direct or indirect harm while performing their duties and professional roles. Despite the psychological burden and the emergence of symptoms of burnout, they quickly express their feelings about the event and the traumatic experience. Like other people, they attempt to express their thoughts and present their concerns, needs, and issues. In addition, we note that the results confirm that Palestinian media professionals exercise caution despite the severity, frequency, and high level of harm caused by these events. They find the internal motivation that stimulates their enthusiasm, energy, and abilities to work effectively, awake and facing life despite all the traumatic events.

The stress and pressure experienced by journalists is a source of internal motivation and energy that drives them to continue working, achieve accomplishments, reconcile with themselves, and recover, all in order to achieve societal mental health. This study is consistent with Al-Ashry's (2016) study, which aimed to identify the level of burnout among journalists in online newspapers. It also intersects with Elissa E. Bolton's (2002) study, which aimed to identify the level of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting from the traumatic events faced by journalists. The study by Frenkel, Koopman, and Spiegel (1994) assessed 18 journalists who

witnessed murders, reported them to the relevant authorities, and covered them in the media. This study was consistent with the study by Ali Bin Shuwail Al-Qarni (2014), which aimed to identify the extent of professional pressures and the degree of burnout experienced by those working in Saudi media institutions. It also closely paralleled the study by Rehab Mohammed Anwar (2018), which aimed to examine journalists' coverage of traumatic events and their relationship to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In discussing the second dimension: (Anger Management), which was the least appreciated dimension, and since the result of the (Anger Management) dimension was "average", it appears for many reasons such as fatigue, physical and psychological exhaustion, tension, fear and oppression, as it arouses the anger of media professionals and raises their level of provocation and nervousness, which exposes them to anger and quick reactions. When the overall score for this dimension is average, this means that there are challenges and events that constitute an advanced level of anger, and this is a worrying matter. However, media professionals face this with a high degree and distinguished experience that makes them able to (Anger Management) and its symptoms and deal with it. The feeling of anxiety, fear and tension and the increase in the severity and repetition of these events and challenges quickly turns into emotional numbness among media professionals, which is reflected in their dealings with their colleagues and relatives, as they practice nervousness, anger and screaming, and sometimes reach the point of bullying and violence with those around them. This hardens the heart and some of them may lose their social relationships and their nuclear and even extended families. However, some of them choose positive ways through which they can Psychological release and venting of pent-up emotions. Some consider expressing their feelings an illogical step, thus burying those sad and disturbing feelings suddenly, thus earning the reward of "restraining anger." Furthermore, some media professionals' attention has not been sufficient to shed light on the personal characteristics and procedural skills required to manage anger, nervousness, and even stress and the accompanying psychosomatic disorders. This is because they do not devote advanced attention to dealing with anger and nervousness resulting from the pressures resulting from crises, trauma, and bloody events in wars.

The current study is consistent with the study by Muhammad Zaghbi (2020), which aimed to identify the relationship between burnout and psychological resilience among counselors in the Sabya Education Department. It also intersects with the study by Rana Khalid (2019), which sought to identify the state of psychological alienation experienced by journalists during field coverage.

The researcher attributes this to the fact that journalistic work in Palestine is extremely difficult and considered a dangerous profession, often referred to as "the profession of trouble." Journalists face daily challenges and pressures due to the complex political and security situation. Journalists are required to deal with important and sensitive events and issues, which increases levels of stress and fatigue, creating significant pressure. Risk levels can be balanced due to the preventative measures and procedures taken by journalists. Their resilience, psychological resilience, and social competence help them adapt to professional pressures and challenges. Psychological and social support can help maintain moderate levels of stress and risk, rather than high levels. Furthermore, training, qualifications, experience, and professional work in dealing with difficult situations can help journalists manage anger, tension, and risk effectively, leading to moderate and, if possible, low levels of stress and risk.

## **Discussion of the Study Hypotheses**

### **First Hypothesis**

The table above shows no statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the responses between the arithmetic means of the level of burnout among media professionals in the West Bank attributable to the gender variable on the total score. The significance level for the t-values was greater than 0.05, and thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

When discussing the first hypothesis related to the level of burnout among media professionals in the West Bank attributable to the gender variable on the total score, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, we find no differences between the sexes when it comes to exposure to burnout. Therefore, both sexes are susceptible to responding to the sources and causes of burnout, especially since both genders of media professionals perform the same professional duties. This study agrees with the study by Barakat and Faten (2014), which aimed to identify the degree of burnout among journalists working in Damascus, in light of the variables (gender, journalistic ownership, and years of experience). It also agrees with the study by Arja Tyrkow and Lena Carlqvist (2015), which included (320) journalists (153) females and (167) males in Sweden, to identify the impact of gender on how they deal with pressure, especially time pressure. It also converges with the study by Khaled (2019) to identify the state of psychological alienation experienced by journalists during field coverage, in addition to revealing the levels of psychological pressure to which journalists are exposed.

### **Second Hypothesis**

It is evident from the previous Table (5) that there are statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the level of burnout attributed to the experience variable on the total score, as the significance level for the (F) values on it was greater than (0.05), and thus the hypothesis is rejected. When discussing the second hypothesis related to the level of burnout among Palestinian media professionals in the West Bank

The null hypothesis was rejected. Consequently, we find statistically significant differences among media professionals due to the experience variable. The researcher found that experience plays a significant role in addressing and confronting the causes and sources of burnout.

These results are consistent with Barakat's (2014) study, which aimed to identify the rate of burnout among journalists. They also converge with Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi's (2020) study, which monitored the level of burnout among public relations practitioners in Saudi public and private organizations and the extent of professional pressures they are exposed to. They also converge with Al-Ya'rubiyah's (2020) study, which analyzed the reality of public relations workers in the government sector in the Sultanate of Oman. They also intersect with Nader Fahmi Al-Zayoud's (2002) study, which aimed to identify the levels of burnout among psychological and educational counselors in public schools in Zarqa Governorate.

### **Hypothesis Three**

Table (5) shows statistically significant differences at the significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the level of burnout attributed to the variable of academic qualification on the total score. The significance level for the (F) values on this was greater than (0.05), and therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

When discussing the third hypothesis related to the level of burnout among media professionals

in the West Bank attributed to the variable of academic qualification on the total score, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, we find that there are statistically significant differences in exposure to burnout due to the variable of academic qualification. This means that the disparity in academic qualifications among media professionals qualifies them to deal with crises and shocks and when covering events, enabling them to mobilize their psychological resilience and resilience in dealing with burnout. This study agrees with Adnan Al-Farah's (2001) study, which he conducted on a random sample of workers with people with special needs in Qatar. This study aimed to reveal the level of burnout in light of certain demographic variables. It also converges with Al-Sabai's (2014) study, which aimed to examine the psychological stress among media professionals in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considering certain variables.

### **Study Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended: Activating the role of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate to form social and legal committees to support media professionals, advocate for their rights, and unify their ranks. Providing journalists with knowledge about burnout, its causes and sources, and how to deal with and treat it.

Training and qualifying media professionals on how to strengthen personal traits, focusing on resilience and psychological resilience to confront and cope with crises and traumatic events. They need to provide psychological counseling to media professionals to treat the symptoms and disorders associated with burnout and to work on correcting their assertive personalities, including traits and skills for psychological adjustment and adaptation, leading to community mental health.

It's worth mentioning the need to conduct scientific studies targeting media professionals on mental health. Establish a psychological support resort for media professionals and those experiencing burnout. Organize conferences, seminars, and workshops to discuss media issues.

Hold study days where media professionals can present their experiences, expertise, achievements, and professional sacrifices. Prepare periodic press reports documenting the violations against media professionals, which are published internationally.

Include a course as a prerequisite for university students to highlight the importance of the media profession in building societies. Develop a code of conduct for the media profession that regulates roles, duties, rights, and responsibilities.

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