

The Scope of Technostress and Care of The Self on Journalists During the Pandemic

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Abstract

In the last two decades, there is an increasingly broad line of studies that warn about the emotional health of journalists and the challenges that it poses for communication professionals to be able to separate work issues from their personal lives. The coverage of COVID-19 exposed many journalists to situations of frustration, discomfort and stress for various reasons: long working hours, not having the appropriate technological material, added to an environment of uncertainty caused by

the pandemic. This study aims to examine the possible scope of technostress –in some cases associated to digital divide– in journalists and analyze if they are aware of the uses of care of the self as a way to deal with stressful situations. For this, our research is based on documentary analysis, a survey answered by (50) fifty Argentinean journalists, and twelve (12) in-depth interviews to experienced journalists. Our findings suggest that constant exposure to computers and smartphones during the lockdown together with difficulties to connect to Internet or to have the adequate materials and the lack of coping strategies –as the care of the self– confirms the presence of technostress. Another result that emerges from this research, it should be addressed in future studies, is that some journalists' reactions about care of the self could respond to the third person effect theory to maintain high self-esteem and not demonstrate vulnerability.

Keywords: Care of the Self, Technostress, Digital Divide, Argentina, Journalists.

1. Introduction

Even if journalists know that at some point they will have to cover a tragedy, and they know how to do it because they received instructions during their studies to carry out this work, they do not have coping strategies to face what these situations can cause them on a psycho-emotional level. The media coverage of crisis events and its impact in journalists continues to gain ground in academic studies ([Beckett, 2015](#); [Hughes et al., 2021](#); [Jukes, 2020](#); [Kotišová, 2019](#); [Massé, 2011](#)); in fact, recent studies also examined the emotional management in the curriculum of communication and journalism universities from Spain and Latin America ([Escudero & Tejedor, 2023](#)). The media coverage of COVID-19 in terms of infections, death and restrictions represented a very deep emotional exhaustion for several journalists, especially in countries like Argentina where the pandemic recorded high mortality rates for a long period of time. Since March 2020, when the quarantine was decreed as a preventive measure in Argentina against the coronavirus outbreak, “the freedom of expression and the role of independent journalism have been under permanent threat” ([Giudici, 2021](#)). In the scenario posed by the pandemic, similar to a crisis scenario, journalists were the main witnesses of the havoc caused by COVID-19: they reported infections and deaths while updating information about the new measures and restrictions provided by governments. In relation to the above, Newman confirms that “journalists are currently bearing witness to individual and collective grief at high levels” ([Clay, 2020](#)) and not all newsrooms and workspaces have tools that allow them to face the emotional challenges that the coverage of certain news may present.

Taking into account the scope of the pandemic in the lives of journalists who were active during said period, this study attempts to determine if at that time they had knowledge or if they had carried out workshops, training on self-care, presented as a tool to cope. challenging situations that are out of our control, such as a global pandemic. It is in this line that our study will be based on the concept of care of the self introduced by Foucault.

To have a better understanding of the level of exposure that journalists had to the pandemic, it is important to specify that communicators from all media focused their efforts on providing clear and objective coverage of the events since the beginning of COVID-19. In other words, journalists with the objective of keeping the public informed about the extent of infections, the new symptoms detected and the progress of vaccines. Likewise, the work of the communicators contributed to knowing how people recovered from COVID-19 depending on the country, ages and environments with the aim of keeping the population aware of the importance of preventive and regulatory measures, which were updated day by day. a day. This whole set of efforts on the same topic that also had them in focus. The Press Emblem Campaign ([PEC, 2021](#)) confirmed that 1,788 media workers in 80 countries died during the first 18 months of the covid-19 pandemic, Latin America was the region where the number of deaths was one of the highest registered in Argentina, 53 journalists died due to COVID-19 ([La Nación, 2021](#)).

Taking into account the scenario posed by the pandemic, journalist were exposed to the issue of the pandemic like the rest of the world's citizens, however, to this exposure were added the hours of work producing and delving into news related to COVID 19, which implies the impossibility of disconnecting from the subject, taking distance, and concentrating on other issues. All this placed them in a situation of high exposure where, as some studies have specified, psychological stress symptoms have been reflected, as will be demonstrated below. All these actions, which correspond to journalistic work, placed many media workers in a situation of mental exhaustion and fatigue that, depending on the situation, could be presented as a type of stress that could be associated with the technostress.

Likewise, following the question of the emotional health of journalists, our

study take into account the concept of “Care of the self” and analyze the association with digital divide. In relation to the digital divide, given that this study focuses on the pandemic period, we consider of interest what was argued by [Ragnedda \(2019\)](#), [Vartanova and Gladkova \(2019\)](#) in terms of the digital divide scopes: consider that it only has to do a technological problem and/or as a matter of adoption, means to ignore other present variables such the overall socio-cultural, educational and political background.

This research begins with a documentary analysis by outlining the concepts of care of the self, digital divide and technostress attempting to enlarge upon the points made via a sample study of 50 surveyed Argentinean journalists, and twelve (12) in-depth interviews to journalist with more than 20 years of experience on the field. This research goal is to answer the following questions:

RQ1 Technostress could be associated to digital divide?

RQ2 Does technostress limit workers' productivity?

RQ3 Could technostress be associated with multiple employment?

RQ4 Journalists are aware about the “care of the self” as a preventive tool for emotions?

2. State of the Art

2.1 Care of the Self

As has been argued, journalists carry out their work in direct connection with the people and situations they experience: survivors, leaders, primary and secondary victims, etc. That is why, starting from this interaction with society, with the other, we consider it interesting to delve deeper into the scope of self-care. In other words, given that care of self is constructed in social relationships, [Boff \(1999\)](#) suggest that care covers more than an individual act and emphasizes that it responds to a way of being; the author suggest that this care is present in the different interactions: with the others and with her environment. Besides, he conceptualizes care as part of the human being, paying special attention to what that care generates in people, translating it as emotional protection for people and their relationships with others ([Campos, 2007](#)).

However, the approach to care of the self, from a professional perspective,

being in this research journalism, makes us take into consideration the concept of the "ethics of care", because professional care would move from the private life to the public and exposed sphere. More precisely, integrating care into journalistic practice would give us, following [Fascioli \(2010\)](#), a broader conception of social justice, since journalism would assume the idea of self-care from an action of responsibility and professional ethics towards society under the idea that we form a network of exchange with the society.

The care of the self of this study will be based on this conception of social justice and professionalism following:

- The journalist's possibility of being aware of self-care, as a form of communication with one's needs, desires, and feelings. From this place they could care for others, developing, through their own lived experience of care different types of interactions (as suggested by [Boff \(1999\)](#))

- Breakdown of a polarized care scheme, going beyond linear forms of power (between those who care and those who are cared for), that is, a care model practice that is non-linear and not limited to the contextual. It is based on the idea of self-care in connection with others who may have a different perspective in relation to care, no reciprocity is expected.

- Acceptance of the reciprocity in terms of care of the others.

- Consciousness of the present time: in the here and now. Embracing the (possibly exceptional) situation and the type of care they can develop.

As can be seen through the points that contain care of the self combined with social justice, it provides a closer and more possible notion to communication professionals since it incorporates the relationship with the body, with others and with the environment. In addition, it promotes the need to take the present time as a care organizer, a way to focus on the situation, feelings, etc; in close relationship with eastern philosophies that cultivate the ability to be present ([De Casso, 2003](#); [Naranjo, 1990](#)).

Foucault provided the theoretical basis for self-care through his classes at the Collège from France. In them he demystified self-care and separated it from the conceptions that find it related to vanity. Foucault showed that the opposite is true: self-care is needed to build stronger citizens, open to mutual collaboration and common construction. In other

words, being able to awaken others should lead us to our own awakening. Foucault (2004) alludes that “self-concern is a kind of sting that must be stuck there, in the flesh of men, which must be rooted in their existence and is a principle of agitation, a principle of movement, a principle of permanent restlessness throughout life”.

Seen in this way, self-concern is an antecedent to self-knowledge. Care as something more every day, for something close, care for oneself. In that sense Foucault (2012) points out that:

"Taking care of oneself has been, from a certain point on, willingly denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or individual interest in contradiction with the interest that must be taken towards others or with the sacrifice of Yes, it is necessary... in this new context, self-care will have as its first form the renunciation of self..."

Caring for oneself does not promote the eradication of the other. Seen this way, “caring about oneself means a way of directing one's gaze: moving it from the outside, from the world, from things, from others, towards oneself” (Garcés Giraldo & Giraldo Zuluaga, 2013). However, this turning towards oneself does not leave us still, we also return to encountering others and promoting the care of others for themselves.

2.1.1 Care and Professionalism

Even if care of the self has been used as a prevention and psycho-emotional support tool by different organizations, its scope and possibilities deserve to be deepened. However, one of the organizations that has addressed self-care in different occasions has been the DART whose goal is “to help create healthier newsrooms with better journalism. They are supported by research results on well-being, adaptability, and the experience of those “in the field” (Dart Center, 2012). Along the same lines, the Fundación Gabo published “10 self-care tips for journalists” in 2019, the introduction of which reads “covering traumatic situations can leave consequences that are difficult to overcome” and specifies:

“Covering a shooting, a terrorist attack or a natural disaster are usually events that leave a journalist marked for life. And doing so successively can gradually undermine the physical and mental health of a reporter.” (Fundación Gabo, 2019).

Taking into account that both organizations –Dart Center and Fundación

Gabo- are considered international references, it is interesting to note that they have put their interest in developing advice and recommendations for journalists from a care approach where, in both cases, the recommendations to journalists are listed so that they can be implemented in a practical and simple way.

2.2 Digital divide

The digital divide research has been presented as a global interest and the scientific literature is vast in that field. In that sense, it can be understood that many authors have contributed with definitions of digital divide, most of which differ mainly in terminology and in emphasizing various aspects of the phenomenon presented as: media literacy, digital skills, digital inclusion, digital inequalities among others. When addressing the digital divide, its levels are taken into consideration: the spread and use of the Internet (correspond to the first level of digital divide), the digital skills (second level of digital divide), and finally the digital services used by citizens to improve their quality of life (third level of digital divide). Following [Hilbert \(2011\)](#) the main approach to distinguish and classifies the digital divide is to answer the following questions:

- Who? (E.g. divide between individuals, groups, countries, ethnicities, etc.)
- With what characteristics? (E.g. income, education, geography, age, gender, etc.)
- Connects how? (E.g. Access or effective adoption)
- Why?
- To what? (e.g. phones, internet, digital TV, etc.) ([Hilbert, 2011](#))

However, the two waves of research in the field of digital divide could be distinguished in the following way: the first, which offers rather technical explanations of the phenomenon, and the second, which also takes into account a variety of socio-cultural aspects. In other words, the first-wave researchers describe the digital divide as a matter of infrastructure development, technology adoption, and the cost of both Internet access and ICT devices. In other words, the access to ICTs is the first and priority criterion used to investigate digital inequalities between and within countries. Indeed, as [Castells \(2001\)](#) suggested, without access to the Internet,

a discussion about digital inequalities would have no sense. In line with this argument, [Hilbert \(2011\)](#) describes digital divide as the gap between those that have access to digital technologies and those that do not. On the other hand, authors like [Monge and Chacón \(2002\)](#) state that the digital divide refers to the different access that people have to information and communication technologies, and the ability to use such tools, the current use made of them and the impact that they have on wellbeing.

In addition, scholars from the second wave of digital divide research, as [Ragnedda \(2019\)](#), [Vartanova and Gladkova \(2019\)](#) argue that framing the digital divide as a technological problem and as a matter of adoption, means to ignore other variables such the overall socio-cultural, economical, educational and political background). In that line, [DiMaggio and Hargittai \(2001\)](#) have defined five levels of digital divide. The top level represents social context, education, age, and other characteristics of the users, which define different experiences and patterns of ICT usage ([Torres-Diaz & Duarte, 2015](#)). This approach provides detailed and focused information, which allows reasonable conclusions to be drawn on the reasons for deepening the digital divide. In other words, the second wave of researchers of the digital divide adopt anthropological approaches to the study of the phenomenon by analyzing the social status and individual characteristics and capabilities of different users, that make the use of Internet and ICT devices successful or not ([Vartanova & Gladkova, 2019](#)).

2.3 Technostress

It is well known that journalists are professionals who deal with pressure, last minute coverages and exposure to situations and stories that they can be related to traumatic events in their daily basis.

In this sense, [Bos et al. \(2004\)](#) research show that occupations other than journalism such as police officers, firefighters, ambulance and medical emergency staff, where the employees act as first responders, are highly stressful but it is not taken into consideration that in many of the situations to which first responders are exposed, journalists are also present (accidents, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, amongst others). However, journalists may not be aware of the degree to which their

professional activity demands and impacts on their emotional health and that this does not only apply to war correspondents but also to employees of small, medium and large media companies. Although over the past few years research has been published on this occupational group, much of it agrees with [Osofsky, Holloway, and Pickett \(2005\)](#) study confirming that journalists may not have access to appropriate assistance to deal with those impacts. Thus, more knowledge on journalists' occupational stress variables is needed to develop training plans and support services for these professionals. Following [Feinstein, Owen, and Blair \(2002\)](#) journalists frequently work with tight deadlines, investigating stories that cover a wide range of tragedies, which may involve putting themselves at risk.

Other studies went even further and suggested that journalists are highly susceptible to stressor-related psychopathology ([Feinstein et al. \(2002\)](#), cited in [Tyson and Wild \(2021\)](#)). As is the case in other professions, journalists also compete amongst each other to gain audiences, views, reactions and professional recognition from their superiors and citizens at large and in that sense, they had a public thirsty for information and updates about the pandemic. To do this, they trusted their ability to continually adapt to new technologies, they incorporated new vocabulary and learned about a new virus, its impact, and consequences. This scenario allows us to understand, that "The (trauma) reporting was coupled with personal experience of living through it and anxiety about loved ones at risk from the virus" ([Šimunjak, 2022](#)). Early studies on journalists' work and exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed high levels of anxiety and work-related stress ([Crowley, 2021](#); [Selva & Feinstein, 2020](#)). Other studies, where they introduced journalists' voices and experiences stated that those works were "encountering misinformation at least once a week" ([Posetti, Bell, & Brown, 2020](#)) and this "disinfodemic," as stated by [Jaakkola and Skulte \(2022\)](#), caused journalists' work conditions to worsen and having an impact on the work routines of journalists in the face of a public that had also changed, as stated by [Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen \(2022\)](#): there was a "crisis coverage gap", the media usually focused on economic indicators and the general population was more interested in practical day-to-day information (2022, p.926).

In that follows, work stress has been a traditionally important subject at an

organizational level, given its close link to workers' health and, thereby, its impact on the administration of economic and human resources in organizations (Durán, 2010). This is one of the reasons behind the extremely wide range of research on work-related stress, particularly from an organization psychology point of view (Schaper, 2004). From the psychological perspective, studies by Lazarus are of particular importance, in which he suggests the existence of three interrelated components in the stress process: situation, personal resources and the person's perception of their situation and resources (Lazarus, 1999). This interrelation accounts for the effect of stress, not only in how the person functions as a worker; but also, in the cognitive, affective and social spheres. The wide-ranging impact of work-related stress, its risks and culture, has consequences both for mental and physical health, and for organizations, which can be seen in how this process greatly influences performance, motivation, and the quality of life of workers, the turnover and progressive withdrawal from jobs, and the resulting impact of these situations on productivity (Arias Gallegos, 2012).

The term Technostress was coined by American psychologist Brod (1984). He referred for the first time to the stress associated with the use of technologies and their impact at a psychological level. According to Brod, technostress is a modern disease of adaptation caused by an inability to cope with new computer (and software) technologies in a healthy way. In 1997, this concept was revised and expanded by two American psychologists, Weil and Rosen (1997), as a result of research lasting 16 years. In their analysis they take technostress to be any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviors or psychology caused directly or indirectly by technology.

According to Chiappetta (2017), technostress at an advanced stage is responsible for many repercussions, both at a working and relational level. At work, amnesia and memory disorders can occur, and this is associated with increasing absenteeism, lack of motivation and loss of professional effectiveness.

3. Methodology

For this study of exploratory scope and mixed qualitative and quantitative design, we have focused on knowing the possible scope of technostress in journalists and at the same time confirming whether journalists have knowledge in

relation to self-care as a possible tool to improve the quality of their psycho-emotional health in exceptional periods or situations, in this case being the pandemic caused by COVID-19. To do that, we divided the study into three (3) phases. The first phase was to advance into a documentary analysis, following [Bailey \(1994\)](#) that contain information we wish to study. Likewise, a systematic and integrative bibliographic review was carried out ([Torraco, 2005](#)) of the available bibliography and we were able to categorize, investigate, interpret, and identify the limitations of physical sources, most commonly written documents whether in the private or public domain ([Payne & Payne, 2004](#)). The searches were carried out in the WOS, SCOPUS, ERIC databases and in the Google Scholar search engine, using search strings such as: “journalists and pandemic”, “journalists and mental health pandemic”, “stress journalism and pandemic”, “journalists and technostress”, “self-care for journalists.”

For the second phase, we produced an online survey based on the documentary analysis and technostress. The survey was online and we were taking into consideration the advantages of this method presented in shorter time required for implementation, fewer transcription errors, and ease of analysis. Also, even if online surveys can be effective and prove efficiency in the study, they require “a respectable response rate as the response rate is often viewed as an important criterion for judging the quality of a survey” in [Wu, Zhao, and Fils-Aime \(2022\)](#).

Finally, in the third phase, based on the survey results we have conducted twelve (12) in-depth interviews to journalists with more than 20 years of experience with the objective of understanding their exposure experiences’ to technologies.

3.1 Design

For the survey, the first questions covered demographic (name, age, gender, professional status, media) and research-related questions about the use and exposition to technologies during the lockdown, and one questions was related to the care of the self. Based on technostress theories ([Brod, 1984](#); [Chiappetta, 2017](#)) we produced three (3) questions based with a Likert reagent of 6, where 1 is equivalent to

“Never” and 6 is “Very often” and one open question was about the care of self-knowledge or experiences on that matter. As specified, a survey instrument with three multiple-selection questions on Likert scales has been used to obtain better knowledge about the indicators derived from the qualitative section, allowing us to obtain quantitative results that allow us to validate the qualitative results.

The survey was sent via email and *WhatsApp* in Spanish between September 2021 and January 2022. The data obtained through the Encuestafacil.com platform was converted into Excel worksheets and later analyzed using the same program. Based on the survey participations and results we produced a questionnaire for five journalists where the questions about the care of the self were introduced. Following [Cassell and Symon \(2004\)](#) the interviewer explores details, and tracks through questions, having greater control over respondent selection, where according to [Robson and Foster \(1989\)](#) sensitive or personal topics will arise. The semi-structured interviews addressed to the experienced journalists from different media were conducted between November and January 2022 and included questions which involved a non-directional approach, following [Taylor and Bogdan \(1987\)](#) there were providing an overview of the study. For the interviews we were approaching three axes:

- o main activity in the media during the pandemic and at the present;
- o interactions with their teams during the pandemic and lockdown, health, mental health;
- o Opinion and /or experiences in the care of the self for journalists

These were open-ended, multiple-choice and exploratory questions, that according to [Amérigo \(1993\)](#) and [García-Alcaraz et al. \(2006\)](#) is an effective technique when seeking information and not knowing all the answers. As previously stated, for this study, in-depth interviews were conducted to twelve (12) journalists and in this way, we sought to achieve the saturation point, that is, the point at which the interviewees repeat answers from others ([Corbin & Strauss, 2007](#); [Lincoln & Guba, 1985](#)).

3.2 Participants

The 50 journalists responded to the research criteria: they were actively

working at a media at the time of the survey and confirmed their consent for the use of the answers for this study.

The survey participants, fifty (50) journalists from Argentina, were between with or without experience in major critical incidents (natural and human disasters) and who work either for a local news organization, nationwide news channel/company or self-managed media outlets during before, during and after de pandemic. In addition, the sample includes journalists who work for one or more than one media, in order to determine if this could increase technostress.

The interviewed journalists responded to the following criteria: having more than 20 years of experience in journalism, working in Argentina during the pandemic and there were made through *Whatsapp* and *Zoom* platform and they provided their consent for the use of their responses. In order to preserve journalists' identities, they will be presented in the study as follows: Journalist 1, J2, J3, J4, J5(...) J12.

3.3 Procedure

An electronic version of the survey, created through the Encuestafacil.com platform was sent via email and WhatsApp, and shared in journalists' groups and organizations. Once the information was collected, a database was established using the application where the questionnaire was uploaded (Encuestafacil.com). The information obtained will be contrasted through the methodological triangulation of in-depth interviews and documentary sources through a systematic review of the scientific literature as part of secondary research (Codina, 2017) to then confront, as Ramírez Montoya and García explain, what is stated in the state of the art.

The triangulation of the theoretical foundations and responses provided by the journalists has allowed us to access a contextualization of technostress, its association with the digital divide and to have a better knowledge of what journalists know about self-care. In this way, the professional experience of journalists is complemented.

4. Results

The survey sample participating in this study was made up of 72% women and 28% men, aged between 30 and 73. The workers taking part in the study belong to

various media: 50% from the radio, 38% written press journalists, 18% TV channels, 12% websites. In addition, out of all the survey respondents, 37 (74%) work in one media, 7 (14%) in 2 media outlets, 5 (10%) in 3 media outlets, and 1 (2%) in 6 media outlets.

Regarding the twelve (12) interviewed journalists, 6 are from printed and online newspapers, 3 from a news agency and 2 from a radio and 1 from a tv station.

In terms of digital divide, 74% of the surveyed journalists recognized the levels 1 and 2 of digital divide were a part of their challenges when they had to work from home. As for technostress, it was confirmed that most of the survey respondents find it difficult to concentrate after working with technology (72%) and that working with technology produces tension and anxiety (58%).

Finally, four (4) of the twelve (12) journalists interviewed in depth said they knew of material, manuals for journalists or training on self-care but that they were designed for journalists in areas of conflict, not in the context of a pandemic. Therefore, they did not consider it as a possible tool. Also, 4 journalists they agreed that they had heard something about care of the self, presenting it as something that had not generated interest in them because - they thought- that was for specific victims and traumatized people; other two (2) journalists they did not know about a possible care of the self for journalists and in both cases they asked to receive materials for their consideration; one (1) journalist was not sure about being exposed to care of the self for journalist materials and considered that make sense because it is more used for people that they were exposed to violent situations or in countries with a reduced freedom of expression where the journalists are not safe ; and one (1) journalist considered that the care of the self it was used for victims of trafficking and domestic violence but it was not sure if that could be also adapted for journalists.

5. Discussion

Through the survey we can observe that stress is also closely related to the environment as there exist, as stated by [Guerrero Barona and Vicente-Castro \(2001\)](#), a

series of similarities that make the individual consider environmental conditions –as the pandemic– more stressful, including uncertainty, lack of information, novelty, a situation’s ambiguity, duration and imminence. This situation in association to a greater exposure to technologies and digital divide provides a very fertile ground for technostress as the figures confirm: in terms of difficulties to concentrate after working with technology (72%) and that working with technology produces tension and anxiety (58%).

Going back to [Guerrero Barona and Vicente-Castro \(2001\)](#), environmental issues play a predominant role and during the pandemic and the lockdown combined with the need to use updated technological material and have a stable Internet connection. These issues are confirmed by the interviewed journalists; J1 and J12. J1 remember:

“With some colleagues we were chatting and working between 2 and 3 in the morning, in our houses everyone was sleeping and the best time to concentrate and send material such as edited videos, photographs, infographics. In a way, we adapted as best we could to the conditions that the pandemic and the confinement had posed to us.”

For J12 it was also challenging:

“I used to ask to my husband and kids to stop their connections when I was uploading some materials, and I used to get very mad when the connection did not work, I had the feeling to work 16 hours per day. It was hard, I was so frustrated; maybe because I am a photojournalist and I care about the quality of my images ...”

While J3 will emphasize high number hours of exposure to technology:

“There were many of us who did not turn off our phones at night; We were like in a state of alert. Many colleagues had already been infected with COVID-19. Insomnia was present in many newsrooms, at least in mine it was a topic that we talked about and recommended what to do to each other. Some began to smoke more, not knowing how to transcend anxiety. So, the way we found was to be more connected than ever, we became very dependent on technology... and it was not and is not easy now to reduce that dependence.”

What was commented by J3 and J7 corresponds to what was stated by the

person who originally created the term technostress, [Brod \(1984\)](#). When J3 recognizes the dependence on technology and not knowing how to control it, this is what the researcher needed with technostress: “a modern disease of adaptation caused by an inability to cope with new computer (and software) technologies in a healthy way” while J7 presents it this way: “I confess that I had a great addiction to the mobile phone, I was very most of the time checking *Whatsapp* and the news about infections, but I know colleagues who were worse than me”. However, J11 during the interview recalled “at one point I no longer knew who he was. I didn't remember if I had changed my clothes, if I had had breakfast” which coincides with what was expressed by J 5 “at one point I felt lost inside my own apartment, I got very irritated when they called me on the phone, I preferred to read messages.”

In addition, what was stated by J3, J5 and J11 corresponds to the symptoms presented by compassion fatigue, since it can occur due to exposure on one case or can be due to a “cumulative” level of trauma. The common symptoms of compassion fatigue include: Chronic physical and emotional exhaustion; Depersonalization; Feelings of inequity toward the therapeutic or caregiver relationship; Irritability; Feelings of self-contempt; Difficulty sleeping; Weight loss; Headaches ([Stoewen, 2020](#)). J1, J2, J4 and J9 confirmed that they were not aware about care of the self for journalists and demonstrated interest in knowing more about it. J4 reaction to it: “we shouldn’t wait to have another pandemic or disaster, prevention should come first, because our work is on the line of first respondents”. However, a point of interest arises with eight (8) of those interviewed in relation to care of the self and the recognition of the possible needs of journalists while the pandemic was going on and currently: seven journalists considered that in their case they had had a bad time but that other journalists had had a much worse time; When some of the results of the survey were shared, 9 of the 12 journalists stated “And yes, some colleagues were very bad”, “Some are still traumatized” or “There are people who continue taking medication.” Regarding care of the self as a possible tool to deal with situations of discomfort or stress, six (6) journalists considered that care of the self as a tool was rather focused on victims of various types of violence, on journalists who are in violent, conflict or in whose countries there are dictatorships or freedom of expression

is limited or controlled. These results obtained from the interviews allow us to create two categories – presented as Others did worse (than me) (ODW) and Care of the Self is for Others (CSO), – that could be associated with the theory of the third person effect that according to Davison's (1983) people tend to believe that other people are more influenced or vulnerable than they themselves are. Even if Davison theory was based in mass media influence many different studies were conducted in social research based on this theory.

Given that the interest in third-person effects lies in its direct relationship with the so-called anti-social messages different authors present them as follows: “Motivated by a desire to maintain and enhance a positive self-conception, people seem to evaluate themselves in more favorable terms than they evaluate others in Johansson (2005)). In that sense, following the self-enhancement view, if the third-person effect is driven by a motivation to preserve self-esteem. In this case, the antisocial message could be that journalists do not want to be perceived as weak, vulnerable, depressed or traumatized, which is why they do not deny the situations experienced for many journalists during the pandemic but they present it as something that has happened to others, in that way they take distance and make the difference, as indicated by the theory of the third person effect, it has to do with an attitude of self-esteem. Based on the above, the categories that have been created as results of the interviews are:

- Others did worse (than me) (ODW): it could be associated with the third person effect theory;
- Care of the Self is for Others (CSO), those “others” are presented as victims, (journalists in difficult areas and other type of victims): it could be associated with the theory of the third person effect.

On the other hand, although in the sample of 50 journalists – within which 11 journalists are in a multi-employment situation – they do not show symptoms of greater techno-stress than the rest of the respondents. In that sense and by taking in consideration the exposed suggestions in Wu et al. (2022) that a survey require a respectable response rate because it represents an important criterion for judging the

quality of a survey we consider that the sample should be exposed to a higher number of journalists under multi-employment in order to take in consideration other aspects related to their needs, characteristics.

6. Conclusion

Through this study it has been confirmed that technostress has been present in the lives of many Argentine journalists, more precisely in more than half of those surveyed, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even if this study presents limitations, the sample is small and focuses on the experience of a single country, the research provides concrete data on the type of technostress present in this population, specifying that there are situations of stress that affect them and that occur outside working hours such as when resting and they experience difficulties in concentrating on other types of activities. Based on the questions on which the research has focused, the RQ1, suggested that technostress could be associated to digital divide, which was confirmed and specified by of the surveyed journalists (74%) and the 100% of those interviewed. In relation to the possible limitations caused by technostress in journalists' productions (RQ2) is confirmed and supported with 72% of the survey respondents explaining and giving examples of their difficulties on concentrating and also acknowledging suffering from tension and anxiety. In addition, the results obtained from the survey confirm that in the context addressed, of pandemic, technostress would not be associated with multiple employment (RQ3); while in relation to care of the self, RQ4, only 4 of the 12 interviewees stated that they knew what it was about but did not associate it as a tool that they could use. What allows us to reflect is that if a training or workshop experience is not addressed to the specific group of workers, in this case the journalists, and provides them tools and advice about how they can explore that in their daily work and activities is not incorporated. Also, it is detected in the in-depth interviews that in some answers the journalists instead of recognizing vulnerability and the need of some help or assistance gave answers that had more to do with the so-called third person effect: the others need help; or these are tools for more vulnerable groups, and this deserves to be explored in future researches. From this, what emerges for future studies is whether journalists

need to feel perceived by society as strong and healthy as a way of not losing credibility, a very important aspect when working in media and being exposed to their audiences.

Finally, the study confirms that journalists do not have emotional management tools such as care of the self or coping strategies.

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