

Professional Stress in Journalism: A Study on Electronic Media Journalists of Bangladesh

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Abstract

To meet the objectives of professional assignments, journalists often suffer from high level professional stress. The key objective of this study is to identify the major determinants of professional stress of journalists in electronic media. The study is, to a large extent, based on quantitative data collected through personal interview of 55 journalists of different private television channels of Bangladesh. The study reveals that inadequate support from management is the most heated cause of professional stress. However, the result also concludes “harassment” at workplace as an insignificant determinant. Other major determinants of stress are “unclear objective”, “insecure job climate”, “excessive time pressure”, “friction”, “long working hours” and “life threat” found in the study. However, though the study is very new to Bangladesh perspective, it is expected that it may help to develop professional stress management policies in this sector.

Keywords

Professional Stress, Stress Management, Causes of Stress, Electronic Media Journalists

1. Introduction

Job is an important part for many people’s life and professional stress related to job is inevitable. There is a firm relation between profession-related stress and performance and there is evidence to support that the stress affects organizational and individual productivity (Bradley & Sutherland, 1994). It is a contemporary issue both for the employees and employers and has become an unavoidable factor in the high performance corporate culture. There are many kinds of stresses in human life; but professional stress or the one that is related to job is unique

in nature and may become “the silent killer” if not managed properly (Tarkovsky, 2007). Professional stress causes different kinds of physiological, psychological, and behavioral symptoms (Table 1) that may lead to collapse of human machine. Organizations and employees must deal with the issues of professional stress and should be smart in tackling stress to stay productive. Employees should be knowledgeable regarding the causes to meet professional stress on time. Professional stress occurs when the employees find disparity between job and work environment especially when they need to work under different categories of pressures and anxieties (Nawe, 1995; Maslach, 2003). Continuing a stressful job may lead to sudden burnout situation at workplace, and could develop negative self-image and other symptoms of stress (Caputo, 1991).

The press serves the role of delivering new information quickly, accurately, and consistently (Sang-young & Cho, 2014) and the electronic media in Bangladesh has grown rapidly and currently, playing a significant role in contributing to the entertainment industry. Since 1997, the industry witnessed a significant qualitative and quantitative change when this sector was privatized. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, there was only TV channel in the country namely Bangladesh Television (BTV) run by the government with limited number of programs and news. However, since 1997 the industry has achieved significant expansion with 41 private television channels. News is a common product of all TV channels and due to more competition caused by the increasing number of television channels (Azad & Hussain, 2015), enormous stress on the news reporters is given.

Journalism is one of the most stressful careers that have to deal with deadlines, busy work environments, tight schedules, extensive travelling, fulfilling the demands of the editors, and the fear of being killed and laid off (Shmoop, 2014). The profession is been rated in the top ten stressful jobs amongst all the professions in the world and faces a shrinking job market (Shapley, 2013). A large number of news reporters in Bangladesh had complained that they could not even report fair news by the threats and pressure of employers and effected parties (Azad & Hussain, 2014). Journalists are often subject to dangerous and life threatening situations and encounter considerable amount of psychological pressure besides other stress, i.e. work overload and job insecurity. Existing studies hardly succeeded in finding out the stress depicts, and rarely generated many ideas to mitigate professional stress (Teasdale, 2006). Our study intends to close the gap.

When professional stress takes a massive shape, it affects the performance of the organization, turns down the quality of individual productivity, deteriorates physical condition, weakens social relations, and ruins family life. Stress at work is inevitable in today’s high performing and competitive corporate culture. However, active interventions may minimize the level of stress to bring a balance between work and life (Baker, 1985). It is the responsibility of the employers and employees to identify the causes of professional stress and should measure its impact on performance to maintain a healthy and productive work life and to avoid the negative consequences. The study tires to address the specific causes of stress of electronic media journalists of Bangladeshi private television channels and endeavors to reveal their opinions about the determinants of professional stress.

2. Objectives of the Study

- 1) To identify and rank the determinants of professional stress of electronic media journalists.
- 2) To recommend specific interventions to minimize professional stress of them.

Table 1. Types of symptoms of professional stress.

Sl. No.	Physiological	Mental/ Psychological	Behavioral
1	Headaches	Anxiety	Irritable/aggressive
2	Migraines	Tension	Withdrawn
3	Changing sleep patterns	Irritability	Social isolation
4	Stomach disorders	Low self-esteem	Consumption of alcohol, tobacco, tea/coffee, drugs, self-medication
5	Raised blood pressure	Forgetfulness	Non co-operative
6	Muscle spasms	Feeling powerless	Accident-prone
7	Back/shoulder/neck pain		Less sociable
8	Sense of feeling unwell		Negligence in personal appearance
9	Unwillingness to work		

Source: Newstrom and Davis (2007) and Authors.

3. Literature Review

Professional stress could be a chronic life-threatening syndrome raised from the work conditions that may negatively influence employees' productivity and personal well-being. According to [World Health Organization \(1948\)](#) stress are states of comprehensive physical, mental, and social illness in a person. Though, no profession is stress-free; and has some degree of strain, and anxiety that could result in productivity and satisfaction at work or may lead to negative results like mental and physical illness if the stress is excessive ([Teasdale, 2006](#)). Work-related stress is considered as the foremost cause of a wide range health problems ([Kivimaki et al., 2006](#)), and is strongly connected to staff turnover, absenteeism, poor morality and declining productivity ([Noblet & Lamontagne, 2006](#)). Increasing level of workplace stress can lead to serious legal allegation against any employers like compensation claims, disciplinary issues, and workplace violence [Brady \(cited in Babcock, 2009\)](#). According to [Canadian Underwriter \(2004\)](#), factors that causes professional stress include conflict/friction among the co-worker ([University of Cambridge, 2014; Friedman et al., 2000](#)), bullying by the supervisors, job insecurity, and the absence of freedom in decision-making ([University of Cambridge, 2014](#)), and some personal issues i.e. family pressure, financial constrains abuse etc. It could be also generated out of fear of uncertainty, unrealistic deadlines and interpersonal conflict ([Babcock, 2009](#)). Professional stress mostly occurs by long working hours that may cause cardiovascular attack ([Uehata, 1991](#)). It also interferes family life and psychological distress ([Major et al., 2002](#)). In many times, bullying and organizational incivility are one of the most upsetting issues for the employees ([Gholipour et al., 2011](#)), that might be caused by allegation, rudeness, frightening, malevolence, insult which directs to aggravation, threat, disrespect, and deterioration of self-confidence ([Lee, 2000](#)). However, the more common psychological job stress is anxiety, and depression that negatively impacts work environment ([Teasdale, 2006](#)). As stated in the U.S Department of Health, Professional stress is harmful physical and emotional responses when the job description of a job does not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the employees. The fight to stabilize the work and family life is purely one of the many stressors that an employee faces at work ([Tyler, 2006](#)). In many times professional stress are created by pressure of ethical conduct ([Ulrich et al., 2007; Glick, 2013](#)). To combat the stress the managers must audit and acknowledge the presence of stress at workplace should undertake stress management interventions to reduce the levels of stress of their employees ([Sidle, 2008](#)). According to [Jones et al. \(2003\)](#), it is found that stress management interventions improve physical and mental health, reduces costs of the employers, and facilitates the reintegration of effected employees into workplace and it is an integral component of health promotion program of an organization ([Kobayashi, 1997](#)). There are three broad categories of stress management interventions exposed by [Ivanevich et al. \(1990\)](#), i.e. reducing the current stressors, identifying the employees under stress and aiding the employees to adjust with the situation that causing stress. [DeFrank and Cooper, \(1987\)](#) recommended, stress management as individual interventions like relaxation and autonomy at work. Stress management techniques could be divided into two types: environmental management ([Murphy, 1999](#)) which is an endeavor to organize work environments to reduce the cause of stress; and the approach that aids the employees to deal efficiently with various types of stressful condition ([Hardy & Barkham, 1999](#)). Physical and mental health is a potential source of work related injury or disease and both the employer and employee have the lawful right, responsibility and accountability to help each other to identify, acknowledge and mitigate stress and stressors to ensure sustainable productivity and workplace harmony.

4. Methodology, Scope and Limitation of the Study

The methodology of this study was designed to address of objectives of the research. The study is descriptive in nature, followed inductive research approach and a survey based research strategy. The methodological choice of the research is both qualitative and quantitative. The survey intervenes to collect required information and data through structured questionnaire. An extensive literature review was conducted to identify the most common determinants of professional stress ([Table 2](#)) and the questionnaire was developed based on the identified variables. Total 55 journalists of fourteen private TV channels were interviewed with a view to making the study informative and representative and a close-end questionnaire survey was conducted too. The questionnaire contains 15 questions and a 5-point likert rating scale (5 *Strongly agree*...1 *Strongly disagree*) were used to capture the opinion of the respondents about important determinants of professional stress. The respondents were mostly male news reporters and camerapersons who have permanently employed in this sector for last five years. The survey was carried out during May to June 2015.

Table 2. Important determinants of professional stress.

	Determinant of Professional Stress	Code	Source
1	Unclear objective	Objective	Semmer (2007)
2	Excessive time pressure	Time pressure	Semmer (2007)
3	Unachievable deadline	Deadline	Turnage & Spielberger (1991); University of Cambridge (2014)
4	Long work hour	Work hour	Sethi et al. (2004); Uehata (1991); University of Cambridge (2014)
5	Work overload	Overload	Sethi et al. (2004); Semmer (2007); University of Cambridge (2014)
6	Fast work	Fast	Sethi et al. (2004); Major et al. (2002)
7	Less freedom	Freedom	University of Cambridge (2014); Canadian underwriter (2004)
8	Inadequate support	Support	Semmer (2007)
9	Workplace harassment	Harassment	Semmer (2007)
10	Friction	Friction	University of Cambridge (2014); Friedman et al. (2000)
11	Pressure for un-ethical conducts	Ethics	Ulrich et al. (2007); Glicken (2013)
12	Insufficient compensation package	Compensation	Canadian underwriter (2004)
13	Family pressure	Family	Major et al. (2002); Canadian underwriter (2004)
14	Possibility of life threat	life threat	Zakaria & Azad (2009)
15	Insecure job climate	Job security	Semmer (2007); University of Cambridge (2014)

Source: Literature Review.

Data analysis of the study used intensive statistical tool such as multivariate analysis technique, specifically Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with the support of SPSS. Important determinants of professional stress have been identified by considering the loading value of each variable (**Table 2**). Higher loading value is considered as high importance of professional stress and vice versa. The respondents were asked about their feelings of stress in terms of the variables, i.e. are they clear about their job objectives? Do they feel time pressure? Are they overloaded with responsibilities? Is there a friction among the peers? What about their feelings of job security. Are they under life threat?, and so on. The researchers have their level best to cover up many issues regarding the professional stress of journalists. However, the study has some limitations too. Major limitation of the study is the scope of the research, as the area does not cover all the television channels of Bangladesh due to financial constrain of the researcher. The sample size was limited to 55 as the research was supposed to be completed in a limited period. The demographic data of the respondents, i.e. age, gender, and others are not considered in the study. The researcher was bias to theories of stress management only to develop the model of the research and interpretation & analysis of the data were organized in accordance to that. The possibility of respondent's responses being biased cannot be ruled out too.

5. Findings

The key objective of the study was to identify the important determinants of professional stress among electronic media journalists of Bangladeshi private television channels. In order to fulfill the research objective, and at the very outset, factor analysis was conducted, as it is an effective statistical tool used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables. Principal Component Analysis was conducted on fifteen (15) variables (**Table 3**) where the KMO value of study was found to be 0.477 and the TVE value is 67.25% at the first stage of EFA. The result shows that, these variables in combined can explain more than 67% of the total variation of professional stress. However, the variable namely "workplace harassment" was found to be cross-loaded (loading in two dimensions) and that might have caused the lower KMO value. That is why the variable "harassment" is dropped from the study. Workplace harassment may not be an important determinant among the reporters and camerapersons as most of the time they work outdoor and have less formal interaction and indoor responsibilities. However, crime and corruption reporters face somewhat harassment outdoor by the parties affected by their news reports.

After dropping harassment from the study, KMO value has increased from 0.47 to 0.512 and which is significant too. This means the problem initially was might be due to less important variable, harassment. Principal

Table 3. Factor summary.

Factor	Variables	Loading Value	Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variation Explained
1	Insecure job CLIMATE	0.838	2.530	18.072
	Fast work	0.692		
	Less freedom	0.601		
2	Friction	0.800	2.015	14.395
	Family pressure	0.691		
	Insufficient compensation package	0.618		
3	Excessive time pressure	0.834	1.529	10.925
	Unachievable deadline	0.615		
4	Long working hours	0.742	1.468	10.485
	Work overload	0.661		
	Pressure for un-ethical conducts	0.606		
5	Unclear objective	0.849	1.102	7.847
	Possibility of life threat	0.710		
6	Inadequate support	0.888	1.026	7.329

Source: Compiled from SPSS Version 20.

Component Analysis have clustered remaining 14 variable under six broad factors and these factors covered around 69% of the total variance of the professional stress. Factor loading of the variables determining the degree of significance of each factor and the Eigenvalue and percentage of variation explained by the factor are shown in **Table 3**. The given result provides statistical evidence to support the newly identified six factors of professional stress factors as coded F1, F2, F3, F4, F5 and F6 (**Table 3**). This shows a firm influence of these variables to cause professional stress as these variables covered 69.081 variances (Appendix 1). Under factor 1, insecure job climate, fast work and less freedom determinants are clustered with the eigenvalue of 2.530 and the percentage of variation explained 18.072 that show significant influence in causing professional stress. The factor may cause both mental and physical stress in professional life. Factor 2 contains three variables friction, Family Pressure, and insufficient compensation package with the eigenvalue 2.015 and the percentage of variation explained 14.395. This factor mostly creates mental and behavioral stress. Factor 3 contains the variables, such as excessive time pressure, and unachievable deadline. The eigenvalue of this dimension is found to be 1.529 and the percentage of variation explained at 10.925. This factor is mostly responsible in causing physical and mental stress in the profession. Factor 4 encloses three variables termed as long work hour, work overload, and Pressure for un-ethical conducts. The eigenvalue of this factor is 1.468 and the percentage of variation explained 10.485. Presence of this factor at profession may cause physical, mental, and behavioral stress. Variables enfold in Factor 5 namely unclear objective and life threat with the eigenvalue 1.102 and the percentage of variation explained 7.847. The factor might cause physical and mental stress in the profession. Factor 6 contains only one determinants inadequate support having the eigenvalue 1.026 and the percentage of variation explained 7.329. This factor may lead to causing mental and behavioral stress in the profession. Though loading table shows that, 14 variables are grouped under six dimensions/factor (**Table 4** and **Table 5**), but the plot diagram (**Figure 1**) argues that they are close variables and somewhat uni-dimensional as we see the circles and their close proximity in the diagram. This means maximum determinants of professional stress are uni-dimensional and interrelated to each other in causing stress.

6. Discussion

The study shows a clear picture of the presences of professional stress in electronic media journalism and identified the influencing determinants that causing stress in their professional life. The main findings of the study are:

- 1) The six factors that are found out of 14 variables.
- 2) Loading values of the variables are greater than 0.50 and found positive in relation to stress.
- 3) Some having highly significant relationship, as their loading value is more than 0.80. Highest loading value amongst 14 purified variables is “inadequate support” (loading is .888). It means the journalist needs support from many dimensions like from the management, peer group, subordinates to cover and broadcast news and a clear indication to the necessity of teamwork in this profession is quite obvious. The journalist may need external

Table 4. Total variance explained.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.530	18.072	18.072	1.875	13.394	13.394
2	2.015	14.395	32.468	1.734	12.387	25.781
3	1.529	10.925	43.393	1.708	12.196	37.977
4	1.468	10.485	53.878	1.590	11.357	49.335
5	1.102	7.874	61.752	1.463	10.451	59.785
6	1.026	7.329	69.081	1.301	9.296	69.081
7	0.925	6.607	75.687			
8	0.829	5.925	81.612			
9	0.677	4.834	86.446			
10	0.550	3.928	90.374			
11	0.408	2.913	93.287			
12	0.382	2.728	96.015			
13	0.304	2.175	98.190			
14	0.253	1.810	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 5. Rotated component matrix^a.

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Unclear objective					0.849	
Excessive time pressure			0.834			
Unachievable deadline			0.615			
Long work hour				0.742		
Work overload				0.661		
Fast work	0.692					
Less freedom	0.601					
Inadequate Support						0.888
Friction		0.800				
Pressure for un-ethical conducts				0.606		
Insufficient compensation package		0.618				
Family pressure		0.691				
Possibility of life threat					0.710	
Insecure job climate	0.838					

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

^aRotation converged in 8 iterations.

supports from the governmental authorities and stakeholders of media like politicians, civil societies, and human right activists to perform their professional responsibility fairly and freely.

The second most important determinants of stress is “unclear job objectives” with the loading value of 0.849. It means significant stress can be created if the job objective is not making clear to the journalists. Objective in journalism can be of two types, one is professional objective, and another is task related objective that is time bound. The first situation of unclear objective may occur if they feel or find a gap between the dignity of the profession and the reality of work life. Because in real life, it is very tough to broadcast true news with the possibility of life threat (0.710), less freedom to work (0.601), pressure for unethical conduct (0.606). [Zakaria & Azad \(2009\)](#)

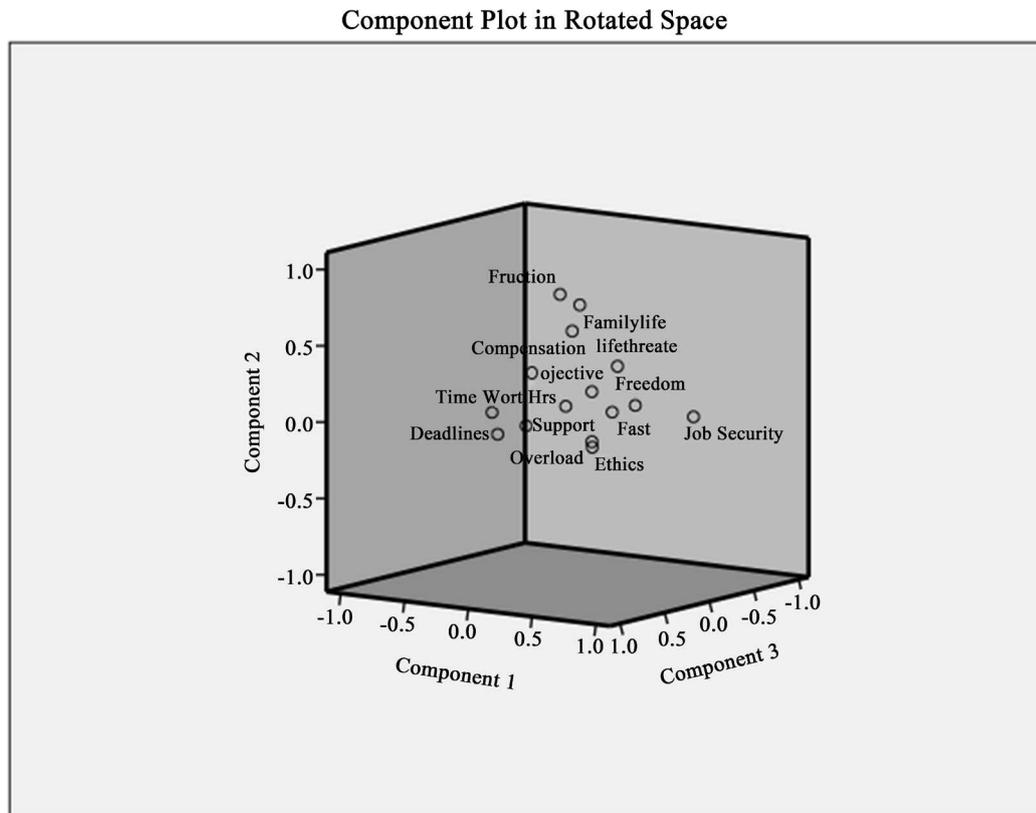


Figure 1. Plot diagram.

also found the same in their study and stated that, this profession is full of stress with life threat, unethical pressure by the owners as most of them are politically connected and therefore, put pressure on the journalist to perform true responsibility. The second situation of unclear objective may occur mostly for the presences of factor 2 where the fourth highest loading value excessive time pressure is present with 0.834 because the work objective means, task to be finished in a given time.

Third highest variable is “insecure job climate” with the loading value of 0.838. The journalist could be feeling job insecurity as the private job culture in Bangladesh is not yet matured with the concept of employee retention strategies. [Zakaria & Azad \(2009\)](#) also found the same findings and stated that this profession is full of uncertainty, with no job security, and no human resource policy and rules. Friction is common in this profession where greater degree of interdependency is required to accomplish exclusive assignments. Every news is a unique project work and there is a presence of aggressive competition among the reporters for the priority of broadcasting may create a competitive environment that may lead to friction among the peers and superiors. So, we see a higher loading value of the variable “friction” (0.800) in the study. Bangladesh frequently faced politically turmoil situations and the TV reporters had to run after breaking news and needed to work restless for long hours. That is why “long working hour” with the loading of 0.742 is another important determinant of professional stress to them. From the study, it is revealed that, stress in electronic media journalism is caused by multiple determinants and they are interrelated, too.

7. Recommendations

Professional stress is not determined by only job related stress. There is an existence of external stressors like, family pressure, life threat, and unethical environment. Therefore, a holistic approach could be taken by the top management of the TV channels to design effective interventions in identifying and reducing the important determinants of professional stress. Tailored-made stress management programs like stress reporting and auditing, job redesign, grievances management program, counseling, meditation and psychotherapy could be undertaken to bring stability in this noble profession and support the journalist to cope with the stressors. [Sidle \(2008\)](#) and

Bradley & Sutherland (1994) suggested the same in their study. Stabilizing functions should act to sustain the process continuity through periodic stress audit and feedback.

At the beginning, awareness program on professional stress could be organized to aid the management and the journalists to take control over work and life. Encourage peer support culture among the journalists through promoting team culture in this profession. Reporters could be empowered with greater flexibility in decision-making and due assistance to attain their objective without stress. Effective teamwork will allow the journalists to share responsibilities and value each other priority and develop a caring and supportive environment to accomplish stressful assignments. Bradley & Sutherland (1994) also suggested conducting training on team-building and relaxation. Some specific stress management interventions like relaxation program to be arranged for the journalists. Most of the research on stress management discussed the success of relaxation program in combating stress. Relaxation program may include yearly outdoor family events could be organized to keep them charged and stress free. Employee wellbeing program, i.e. recreations facility, family events, family friendly work environment, recognition, and reward for their wellness. Teasdale (2006) also mentioned to bring a balance in professional life. Work life balance issue is to be considered as a key issue and employee concierge service could be introduced to help busy employees to make their family life easy. This employee assistance service may include household services, and onsite medical care, utility bill payment, repair services, banking services, legal advice services etc to reduce off-the-job concerns, increase on-the-job focus, and company loyalty, to balance work and personal lives and enjoy hassle free and peaceful life. Some of the government organizations Bangladesh, like military services, organizations under petroleum corporations, port authorities, are provided with these types of services.

Press Club, the association of the journalists in Bangladesh, may take some measures to help the journalist by taking programs like counseling, advocacy program, policy formulation to reduce stress and mainly a unified service rules for the journalists to promote better human resource management practices in this profession.

Government should undertake protection programs for the journalist by providing security by law enforcing agencies. The journalists killed in the line of duty should be provided with justice and their family members should be taken under governmental rehabilitation program.

8. Conclusions

Electronic media journalists are playing a pivotal role in promoting democracy, human rights, good governance, and other social issues. So, their stress in the professional life should be assessed with due diligence. This study finds the presence of professional stress among the Bangladeshi electronic media journalists with a significant value. However, the professional stress of TV journalists are largely dependent on less support, unclear objective, insecure job climate, time pressure, friction, long-hour work and a new discovery that is life threat. Harassment does not come as an important determinant in this profession but external bodies usually harass them. Adequate support, job security, positive interpersonal relationship among the co-employees, better salary, and fringe benefits could bring higher efficiency in this profession. However, the journalists should take some personal initiatives to be knowledgeable about the ways of handling professional stress and develop a self-help approach to reduce the degree of stress to remain productivity as well. Journalism has become a critical occupation day by day. In search for news stories, they need to see, write, and witness many unpleasant incidents that could be stressful and may end with life threatening consequence of their life. A well thought-through, proactive approach of professional stress management could be organized by all the stakeholders of journalism to combat stress and to make this challenging profession pressure-free, productive, and enjoyable.

Professional stress is a multi-dimensional situation of a person's life that could be caused by off and on the job stressors. In managing people with productivity and job satisfaction, professional stress management is a prime issue of consensus and consciousness for the new generation managers, employees, and the policy makers at large. The concept of professional stress and its major determinants could be an important issue of study to bring efficiency in work and balance in social life. The research could be helpful to identify the symptoms of stress, outcome, and impact of stress on performance of the journalists in the future.

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