

# Courting Trauma: An Unspoken Mental Health Crisis Among Journalists in East Africa

## Lydia Ouma Radoli

Leuphana Institute of Advanced Studies in Culture and Society (LIAS-CAS) Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany, lydia.radoli@leuphana.de

ABSTRACT: For journalists covering trauma, capturing horrific images is part of the job. Each assignment feeds into the next, creating a cycle of witnessing horror. The story begins with getting the visuals, talking to witnesses, recording evidence, packaging, and relaying to the audience. The story is not worthwhile without visuals. However, every traumatic image captured is seared in the journalist's cerebral cortex. In this delicate space, the images live and become part of the journalist's internal memory. A silent companion, a constant reminder of the horror the journalist has witnessed - signaling a courtship of sorts. Using narrativity and in-depth interviews as qualitative methods, the paper situates the problem of a mental health crisis among journalists in East Africa covering traumatic events. Through in-depth interviews, narratives of journalists from Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda indicate a courtship with trauma in the line of duty. The journalists are contextualized as visual rhetors - engaged in the production and dissemination of horrific or difficult visual content. Frost (2019) describes visual rhetors as journalists who witness and produce visual frames of the dark side. This form of media practice produces images of violent conflicts. Learning from Visual Rhetoric and Dual Representation theoretical frames, the paper examines a correlation between visual rhetors 'exposure to horrific images and trauma. Arguing that visual rhetors' multiple exposure to traumatic images in the production process causes trauma. The escalation of trauma as a mental health issue among visual rhetors is seldom talked about, yet it poses a mounting crisis that demands intervention.

KEYWORDS: journalists courting of trauma, unspoken mental health crisis, narrativity, portraiture

#### Introduction

The 'courting trauma' imagery describes the connection between journalism and trauma following the accumulation of emotional disturbances after repeated exposure to horrific visuals. Work-related trauma is prevalent in high-stress professions such as law enforcement, the military, and in journalism. The near symbiotic relationship between trauma and exposure to violent visuals forces journalists to reproduce horrific images to either find coping mechanisms or succumb to trauma. In East Africa, journalists covering traumatic events, referred to in this paper as visual rhetors – those who witness and produce visual frames of the dark side Frost (2019), rarely speak out. The trauma remains hidden or suppressed and is not the result of a single, isolated traumatic event, but rather a gradual buildup of exposure to trauma over time. Thus, initiating a courtship of sorts. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of violent images on war correspondents and journalists who cover large-scale disasters (Crouch et al. 2006; Feinstein and Nicolson 2005; Feinstein et al. 2015; Feinstein et al. 2019). In the 1990s and early 2000s, Anthony Feinstein was one of the first social scientists to perform an empirical study on the psychological effects of war reporting. Feinstein is also credited with dispelling the misconception that combat journalists and foreign correspondents were immune to emotional trauma in the form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Massé 2011). These journalists were regularly exposed to traumatic content including graphic images, videos, and firsthand accounts of violence and tragedy. Over time, Feinstein et al. (2014) established that repeated exposure to trauma can take a toll on journalists' mental health, leading to symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Courting trauma can be pernicious because the impact of frequent exposure to trauma on mental health can go undetected. Regardless, visual rhetors have an obligation to continue reporting on trauma events as a precinct inherent in the journalism industry, even if they are aware of the negative effects these events

have on their mental health. In East Africa, visual rhetors are pressured to produce content quickly and accurately, usually with limited resources and psycho-social support. They may also face harassment, threats to their safety, and censorship, further exacerbating work-related stress. Although their dedication to their work is admirable, it can affect their mental health. Visual rhetors may also feel guilty, ashamed, and helpless after witnessing traumatic events (Holmes and Corrin 2008). Violent visuals can trigger trauma by activating the brain's threat response system, which prepares the body for fight or flight (Feinstein et al. 2015). This system involves the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which increase heart rate, blood pressure, and alertness (Brewin et al. 1996). However, when the threat is prolonged or repeated, as it often is for visual rhetors, this system can become dysregulated and cause chronic stress. Chronic stress can impair the brain's ability to process and store information, regulate emotions, and form memories. This can result in flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, avoidance, numbness, or hyperarousal symptoms (Brewin et al 1996; Frosh Pinchevski 2014). According to Pearson et al., (2012) exposure to violent visuals, such as graphic images or videos of violent events, can similarly affect the brain in the same way exposure to a traumatic event does. According to psychologists (Byrne Becker, Burgess 2007) even if a person is not present during the violent occurrence and merely recounts what another party tells them, their brain can perceive the visuals as a threat and so activate the stress response.

#### Literature Review

#### Violent images

Horrific images are ubiquitous in today's media landscape, especially in the coverage of wars, conflicts, and disasters. Visual rhetors working with these images, whether they are photographers, editors, or videographers, face a unique set of challenges and risks. For example, Feinstein and Owen's (2013) research on war journalists showed higher rates of PTSD and depression when compared to journalists who limit themselves to other social issues and avoid risky and violent locations for stories. Feinstein et al. (2014) acknowledge that frequency rather than duration of exposure to images of graphic violence is more emotionally distressing to journalists dealing with User Generated Content (UGC). In addition, journalists become desensitized in the process, and violent images have a less emotional effect on them over time. While this can be a coping technique that allows them to continue working, it can also make it difficult for them to sympathize with the subjects of their reporting. Exposure to violent graphics (Feinstein 2014), and financial distress (Papadopoulou et al. 2022) can also have a negative impact on a journalist's physical health, causing headaches, stomach issues, and sleep disorders (insomnia and nightmares). Since visual rhetors are at a higher risk for mental health issues, they require intentional self-care and support from colleagues, friends, and family to cope with the drawbacks of their work. The rhetors are usually the first respondents and eyewitnesses to violent news and trauma reporting, which takes a heavy toll on their mental health (Seely 2017; Keats 2010).

# **Journalism Practice and Mental Health**

Visual rhetors in East Africa are continuously exposed to various sources of stress, such as covering traumatic events, working under tight deadlines, facing online harassment, and coping with uncertainty and instability in the industry. This happens even as they undertake a responsibility to produce content for the masses and societal voices. The stressors put their mental well-being at risk. Possetti et al. (2023) survey indicates that during the COVID-19 pandemic, 70% of journalists reported psychological distress due to their work. In another study, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that female journalists were more likely to experience harassment and threats online than male journalists, which can also

impact their mental health (Newman et al. 2023). Moreover, journalists who cover topics such as climate change, human rights, and social justice may face additional challenges and risks that can affect their emotional well-being, the study reported. Additionally, Keats (2010) avers that the experience of photographers capturing traumatic events differs from that of print journalists, especially since they are often pressured to get up close to gruesome and horrific crime scenes as part of their jobs. Despite these challenges, visual rhetors in East Africa must deal with stigma, lack of awareness, access to professional help, and lack of organizational policies and practices that promote a healthy work environment. As a result, they may suffer in silence or resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or self-isolation. This happens despite the critical role of the media in holding those in power accountable and fostering dialogue and democracy. Poor mental health state affects the ability of visual rhetors to perform their duties effectively and ethically. Furthermore, the mental health impacts of journalism in East Africa are usually not well-understood or talked about openly. This is due to the stigma and cultural norms surrounding mental health issues and the overall perception that journalists should be able to manage the demands of their work without showing weakness. Consequently, journalists in the region hesitate to seek help when they struggle with mental health issues, which can cause more severe problems as time passes.

#### The Nexus Between Trauma Visuals and Mental Health

Reporting on violence can be a double-edged sword for visual rhetors who encounter constant mental health stressors from graphic images, sounds, and accounts of violence. In East Africa, journalists must deal with other setbacks like threats of violence and political pressure which contribute to the sense of helplessness and despair. East Africa contends with less sensitization and vitality in addressing mental health issues among journalists. Routine subjection to trauma leaves visual rhetors feeling unsupported and isolated choking on their unburdened experiences of trauma. Since they work under stressful and dangerous conditions, visual rhetors are among the groups vulnerable to mental health problems. According to a survey conducted by Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) in 2019, displaced and distressed people in East Africa face elevated levels of mental health needs, often linked to their experiences of past displacement and future uncertainty. Mental health among journalists in East Africa is intricately linked to experiences of violence, war, trauma, and harassment. For example, a study by the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) found that 70% of Ugandan journalists reported experiencing threats or intimidation during work, and 40% said they had suffered physical attacks (Mwesige et al 2018). Another study by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) revealed that 86% of Kenyan journalists had witnessed traumatic events such as death, torture, or rape, and 29% showed symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (MCK 2016). According to Reporters San Frontier (RSF 2023), Rwanda's specter of genocide lingers in journalists' collective memory, and genocide-related news must adhere government's ideology. Three decades of terror and a culture of silence limit freedom of expression, affecting journalists' work. Journalists are frequently subdued to surveillance, espionage, arrest, and enforced disappearance (RSF 2023). Despite these challenges, many visual rhetors in East Africa lack adequate access to mental health services or support. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that most African governments spend less than 1% of their allocated health budget on mental illness (Mayberry 2021). Moreover, stigma and lack of awareness around mental health issues can prevent journalists from seeking help or disclosing their problems. A report by the International News Safety Institute (INSI 2014) noted that some African journalists felt ashamed or weak for admitting their mental health struggles, losing their jobs or credibility.

#### Visual Rhetors and The Dark Side

Visual rhetors are journalists who produce visual frames of the *dark side* Frost (2019). Visual rhetors must consider many factors when producing or choosing visual content, such as the context, the audience, the purpose, the ethics, and the aesthetics of the visuals. They also must be aware of the effects of visual content on the viewers, such as emotional responses, cognitive processes, and behavioral changes. They can use various strategies and techniques to enhance the impact and meaning of visual content, such as framing, cropping, editing, captioning, juxtaposing, and narrating. The choice of modes and genres of visual content suit different situations and goals, such as news photos, documentaries, infographics, cartoons, memes, and interactive media. Visual rhetors play an essential role in journalism because they inform, educate, entertain, inspire, and challenge the public through visual storytelling. The stories are interrelated and may include themes like violence, crime, and terror. Producing a visual image in journalism involves capturing, editing, rendering, and previewing, therefore, generating multiple, similar, and dissimilar exposures to trauma. The following figure indicates the frames of stories visual rhetors in East Africa produce.

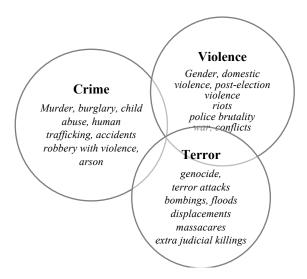


Figure 1: Frames of Trauma Stories *Source: Author 2023* 

## **Visual Rhetoric Theory**

Visual Rhetoric theory is concerned with the study of visual imagery within the discipline of rhetoric (Foss 2005). It is a branch of knowledge dating back to classical Greece as a study of symbols, essentially it fits within the foundation concepts of communication. Visual rhetoric refers to the use of visual imagery to achieve a communication goal such as to influence people's attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. The study of visual rhetoric, therefore, is to ask the question; "how do images act rhetorically upon viewers?" (Hill and Helmers 2012, 1). The techniques of visual rhetoric align with the classic pillars of rhetoric: a) *Ethos* - an ethical appeal meant to convince an audience of the author's credibility or character; b) *Pathos* - an emotional appeal meant to persuade an audience by appealing to their emotions; c) *Logos* - an appeal to logic meant to convince an audience using logic or reason (Randy 2013). However, relevant to this paper, is how capturing images impacts visual rhetors. The rhetoric theory is concerned with the social function that influences and managed meanings (Blummet 1991: xiv), therefore suggesting a link between image and rhetoric. Key factors that enhance the choice of image and its interpretation in media use include; a) *the nature of the image* - the

identification of the image by looking at features captions, the material used, and forms of the image; b) the function of the image - concerned with how the image operates to the viewer's purpose and the effect intended by the creator of the image; c) evaluation of the image assessing the image using the criteria of whether it performs the role intended by the of the creator (Foss 2005). Visual rhetors apply news frames aimed to shock and provoke human interest in the production of content. The images are convoluted sometimes in an unpalatable visual meal of bloodshed, death, maiming, destruction, and horror. The showing of difficult images is disturbing yet done for the public interest and recording history. Depiction of horrific images can be traced to the 1890s, William Hearst's chronicles dubbed the first "media war". Hearst's emphasis on visuals was prominent when he realized that audiences were attracted to horrific images. He developed the phrase; "If it bleeds, it leads" (PBS 1999). The visual rhetoric theory offers an interpretation of visuals that are seemingly dangerous to the health of journalists. Although visuals are edited to meet the safety and ethical needs of audiences, visual rhetors capture and process raw uncensored images. Best (2021) is critical of the adage phrase that put emphasis on gory images and is blind to the destructive nature of violent visuals. This calls for scrutiny and alternative news frames that depict considerable sensory and ethical keenness.

# **Dual Representation**

Chris Brewin, Stephen Joseph, and Tim Dalgleish developed the Dual Representation Theory (DRT) in 1996. The theory is rooted in psychology to explain the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It attributes certain symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, and emotional disturbance to the memory process that occurs following exposure to a traumatic incident. Brewin et al (1996) recognize that PTSD is commonly characterized by several negative emotions, such as sadness and anger, and by negative cognitions, such as guilt. Further, indicating that at the core of PTSD is the alternation between re-experiencing and avoiding trauma-related memories. DRT offers two distinct memory systems that operate concurrently during memory formation: the Verbally Accessible Memory system (VAM) and the Situationally Accessible Memory system (SAM). According to Brewin et al., (1996), the VAM system consists of consciously processed knowledge that can be recalled and reported. The SAM system on the other hand stores unconsciously processed sensory information that cannot be intentionally remembered. According to this view, the VAM system is damaged after a traumatic experience because conscious attention is attached to the related information. The authors argue that as a result, trauma memory is disproportionately focused on dread, which inhibits information processing. The outcome is PTSD symptoms such as traumarelated cognitions, assessments, and emotions. During a traumatic incident, the SAM system records vivid sensory information, which is automatically retrieved when exposed to traumarelated stimuli. The system is assumed to oversee flashbacks, and nightmares in the PTSD symptomatology. The theory suggests three outcomes of the emotional processing of trauma, successful completion, chronic processing, and premature inhibition of processing (Brewin et al, 1996). Though with criticism, the theory was updated in line with the developments in cognitive neuroscience (Brewin, Gregory, Lipton and Burgess 2010; Byrne, Becker, and Burgess 2007). In the revision, authors (Pearson et al. 2012) spell that involuntary flashbacks as a symptom of PTSD arise from an imbalance between sensory and contextual representations registered at the time of the trauma. DRT emphasizes the relationship between the information received and how it is processed. For instance, sensory information from traumatic images is stored in the memories of visual rhetors and releases emotional stimuli like flashbacks, nightmares, and hypersensitivity. The visual rhetoric and Dual Representation theories explain the connection between exposure to horrific visuals and trauma.

#### **Method and Materials**

Primary data was sourced from qualitative in-depth interviews with twenty-four (n=24) journalists, 8 participants from each country. The visual rhetors had covered or were still covering traumatic events. The data for this paper is derived from an ongoing study on the visual witnessing trauma phenomenon among journalists in East Africa. To further investigate trauma among journalists in the region, a second phase of the study uses a mixed methods approach triangulating a PTSD symptomatology survey and in-depth interviews linking trauma journalism and psychology. However, the focus of this paper is to situate unvoiced narratives from accounts of visual rhetors from Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda based on in-depth interviews, observations, and field notes. This paper employs narrativity as a qualitative method that involves eliciting stories from participants about their experiences, beliefs, and perspectives. Narratives can provide rich and nuanced insights into the meanings and interpretations that people assign to their lives and contexts. According to (Manfred, 2021) narratives can reveal complexities and contradictions that shape human behavior and identity. Narrativity allows for the exploration of multiple dimensions of reality and respects the agency and voice of the participants. Narratives foster empathy and understanding among researchers and audiences. The method recognizes the vitality of storytelling and individual experiences in comprehending complex social phenomena.

Studies show that fewer than twenty participants are sufficient for in-depth analysis (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that a qualitative in-depth interview should at least be carried out with between 5 and 25 participants. Traumatic stories are risky and less attractive to journalists, a few visual rhetors were engaged in this genre, further making their stories vital. The visual rhetors had covered trauma events for close to or over a decade. Some of the stories were intense and involved *terror*, *crime*, and *violence* and generated a lot of national and global interest. The analysis follows Marsh and White's (2006) steps for narrative analysis: a) identification of visual rhetors; b) data collection and recording; c) transcription of data; d) theming of the data to address research questions; e) interpretation of meanings; f) analysis and presentation of findings; g) making conclusions. The analyzed themes identify constructs of stories and meanings that ascribe experiences of trauma.

## **Findings**

Narratives depict visual rhetors in East Africa who have courted trauma in the line of duty in the absence of trauma counseling. Some of the visual rhetors revealed gripping details that demonstrated the extent of the trauma that was harbored in their memories. There were vivid manifestations of trauma among the rhetors during the interviews. The rhetors perceived journalism as a calling to accept exposure to horrific images as part of the job. The visual rhetors braved every day of the field assignment with a strong resilience masked in blurry eyes and heavy hearts. Issues on mental health were seldom talked about or addressed in newsrooms. Some newsrooms in East Africa lacked sufficient human resources and relied on interns or newly recruited journalists to supply the demand for traumatic news content. One respondent from Kenya detailed:

"Unfortunately," in the newsroom when there is breaking news, we have limited time and workforce. You will find rookie reporters, and junior reporters being sent to such events because nobody knows what is really happening" (n=2).

Journalists grappled with precarious social and economic strains. There were cases where journalists were harassed in the line of duty, particularly in covering political strife or being critical of regimes. Some journalists faced dire financial consequences as salaries were slashed due to the after-effects of COVID-19 or just poor economics. Others had lost their

jobs and struggled to meet their financial obligations. These cases contributed to psychosocial challenges. As a respondent from Uganda noted:

"When people tell you 'Umese mobile – 'you look bad' (authors translation) then you know its stress. But you can't know, like here some of us are given freelance contracts but in the actual sense, you are not a freelancer, you are on a full-time job" (n=4).

#### **Culture of Silence**

Visual rhetors' experiences of trauma in newsrooms were trivialized. Those who spoke about their individual experiences of trauma were considered weak. The visual rhetors were male cultured to stay silent and refrain from showing any sense of emotional weakness. The work in newsroom structures also demanded sturdy journalists capable of meeting deadlines and rigorous work schedules. In most cases, silence became a mechanism of not having to tell the experience and avoiding the conversation altogether. The construct of silence was prevalent in the deprivation of safe spaces where the journalists could become vulnerable, without having to attract negative comments or prejudice from their peers and editors. Still, speaking of the trauma experiences was received with subtle denial or contempt. Another visual rhetor from Uganda noted.

"When I returned to the newsroom my boss asked me if I had the story. He did not think about how I had risked my life but was eager to get the story. I am lucky that most of the time when I come from the field I don't edit. I avoid it and create excuses. "I keep myself busy, to protect myself" (n=3).

# Marginalization of Voices of 'Self'

In journalism practice, the story is the priority, while expressions of 'self' must be refrained. Visual rhetors were utterly concerned with their inability to help the affected subjects of their stories. The structures and formats of storytelling also preclude experiences of self unless one was doing a first-person account story genre. Visual rhetors are required to disassociate from the stories and subjects they cover. The rhetors are frequently at the center of active violence. They are often injured on the assignments and face life-threatening situations, only when they produce reporters' packages (narrations from the field) do audiences get a glimpse of the risks involved. However, personal danger is not as prioritized as the breaking news event.

"When I returned to the newsroom my boss asked me if I had the story. He did not think about how I had risked my life but was eager to get the story. I am lucky that most of the time when I come from the field I don't edit. I avoid it and create excuses. "I keep myself busy, to protect myself" (n=1).

# Minimalization of Trauma

Visual rhetoric creates an emotional detachment as a coping mechanism. The rhetors are expected to make choices in the process of constant coverage of traumatic events. They tend to veer away from speaking to people about traumatic experiences and may come across as cold and callous. The visual rhetors are accustomed to watching horrific events and are likely to employ unnecessarily intense graphic images and may not realize their effect on the general audience. Newsrooms do not provide support for rhetors who grapple with mental health issues. Most newsrooms provided safety and security measures for the journalists, however, exposure to trauma is viewed as an occupational hazard:

"Unfortunately, there is no time to have conversations with the editors, occasionally unless you tell the editor that..." Some would just ignore, and some would remind you that the newsroom is a crisis center. You are always on the move, and you must develop a thick skin" (n=8).

### Silent Guilt and Self Doubt

The guilt comes mostly from the inability to offer any help to the victims of violence whose stories the visual rhetors capture in their coverage of news. The rhetors are sometimes represented in the imagery of 'vultures' descending on the victims and witnesses of crime and terror hungering for their narratives, pictures, and experiences. When the story is done, the visual rhetors pack and leave the victims to deal with the aftermaths of the trauma. The feeling of helplessness among the visual rhetors is experienced after emerging from the field, long after the story is done. There is physical isolation from the site of the story and assignment, however, the experiences remain in the minds of the journalists.

"That time I could feel the smell of death, I could smell death in my nostrils and all that. I was so shaken that I had to spend the night out of the capital. I went to Nakuru and booked a hotel away from Nairobi. Because I was smelling death" (n=7).

# **Alternative Trauma Mitigation**

There is evidence that African knowledge provides cultural, religious, and communal forms that can be applied to interventions for trauma among journalists. Visual rhetors' narratives form aspects of the oral tradition that can inform newsrooms on talk therapies to deal with trauma. Visual rhetors sometimes found sharing with their spouses, family, and friends relieving, they noted that colleagues in the newsrooms were not open to engaging in conversations on trauma experiences.

"So, you end up feeling pain and no one can notice that pain except God. There are no mitigations before going to the field and after. I am lucky that I got an understanding wife. Somethings when you talk to her, she can understand you, and she can calm you down. I also have two friends, most of my friends are older people" (n=6).

However, such mitigating efforts should not be one-off initiatives but must be embedded in the practice of journalism throughout the newsrooms.

## Discussion

Visual Rhetoric (Foss 2005) and Dual Representation Theories (Brewin et al 1996) connect the production of visuals and trauma phenomena among visual rhetors. The theories offer a critique of an obsession with violent visuals as determinants of news. The production of visuals occurs through a multi-layered cycle of production (Huxford 2005) thus intensifying the frequency of exposure and exacerbating trauma occurrence. This paper argues that personal dispositions and experiences of visual rhetors might intervene in reactions to trauma. The data from the narrative strongly suggests a growing trend in research that focuses on trauma among journalists in the Western part of the world (Feinstein 2014; Seely 2017; Papadopoulou 2022), but little in the South. The search for creative and relevant strategies to address the crisis of mental health within newsrooms was a common thread in most of the responses collected. Mitigation could utilize strategies like de-briefing of individual experiences, innovative psycho-social approaches like talk therapies, open dialogues, and normalizing conversations on trauma. Some notions of strategies are rooted in African epistemology (Asante and Mazama 2005) that emphasizes communal and familial mental health care. The knowledge is rooted in religion, spirituality, and culture. While there were some notable interventions, they were on a small scale, therefore newsrooms should consider transitioning to more flexible alternative models for news production that are not insistent on horrific images a frame for sellable news. Sustainable and transferable strategies to address mental health among journalists will enable journalists to have control and autonomy over their occupational and personal goals. It also coincides with the need to have healthy journalists to mirror society, but also to improve the overall performance of the media industry. Newsrooms in East Africa could also learn from models such as those from the Dart Centre for Trauma Journalism Bryane (2017), Media Council's Safety and Security protocols,

and connect with valuable networks in the continent and outside to improve journalists' mental well-being.

#### Conclusion

The nature of journalistic work exposes them to traumatic events, including violence, crime, and conflict. Particularly in East Africa, journalists face unique challenges such as political instability, civil conflict, and censorship. These challenges lead to various mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sometimes substance abuse. The media industry produces traumatic events that are intricately and inherently embedded in the newsroom production process and the cycles of trauma coverage. These structural and production formats may inadvertently cause trauma and marginalize the experiences of journalists. This forms structural disadvantages within the media system. In retrospect, the element of media practitioners' well-being and overall newsroom culture is also subject to calls for the development of mechanisms to harness the mental health crisis. Research and action on journalists' mental health in East Africa is urgently required. Some steps include increasing funding and resources for mental health services; providing training and sensitization for journalists and media managers on mental health issues; creating peer support networks and counseling programs for journalists; advocating for better protection and safety measures for journalists; and raising public awareness and reducing stigma around mental health problems. By addressing the mental health needs of journalists in East Africa, media houses can improve their quality of life and enhance their professional performance. Perhaps, using a model that breaks the courtship of journalists and trauma.

## References

Asante, Molefi Kete, and Ama Mazama. "African Epistemology." *In Encyclopedia of Black Studies* (Eds.) SAGE https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412952538.

Best, Sara. 2021. "Opinion:' If It Bleeds, It Leads' — The Modern Implications of an Outdated Phrase." *Pepperdine University Graphic*. Available at: https://pepperdine-graphic.com/opinion-if-it-bleeds-it-leads-the-modern-implications-of-an-outdated-phrase/.

Brayne, Mark. 2007. Trauma and Journalism: A Guide for Editors and Managers. Dart Center

Crouch, Mira, and Heather McKenzie. 2006. "The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research." *Social Science Information* 45(4): 483-499.

Brewin, Chris R., James D. Gregory, Michelle Lipton, and Neil Burgess. 2010. "Intrusive images in psychological disorders: characteristics, neural mechanisms, and treatment implications." *Psychological Review* 117, 210e232.

Byrne, Patrick, Suzanna Becker, and Neil Burgess. 2007. "Remembering the past and imagining the future: a neural model of spatial memory and imagery." *Psychological Review* 114, 340e375.

Brewin, Chris. R. 2013. "Episodic memory, perceptual memory, and their interaction: Foundations for a theory of posttraumatic stress disorder." *Psychological Bulletin*. doi:10.1037/a0033722.

Brewin. R. Chris and Neil Burgess. 2014. "Contextualization in the revised dual representation theory of PTSD: A response to Pearson and colleagues." *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*. Vol. 45(2014)217e219. Elsevier.

Brewin, R. Chris, Tim Dalgleish, and Stephen Joseph. 1996. "A Dual Representation Theory of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." *Psychological Review* 103(4): 670-686.

Brummet, Barry. 1991. Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture. Tuscaloosa University of Alabama.

Dart Center. 2023. *Covering Trauma: Impact on Journalists*. Columbia University. Available at: https://dartcenter.org/content/covering-trauma-impact-on-journalists.

Feinstein, Anthony, and Dawn Nicolson. 2005. "Embedded journalists in the Iraq war: Are they at greater psychological risk?" *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 18(2): 129-132.

Feinstein, Anthony, Blair Audet, and Elizabeth Waknine. 2014. "Witnessing images of extreme violence: a psychological study of journalists in the newsroom." *JRSM Open 5*(8): 2054270414533323.

Feinstein, Anthony, Justus Wanga, and John Owen. 2015. "The psychological effects of reporting extreme violence: a study of Kenyan journalists." *JRSM Open* 6(9): 2054270415602828.

- Foss, Sonja. K. 2005. "Theory of Visual Rhetoric." *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media*. Eds. Ken Smith, Sandra Moriarty, Gretchen Barbatsis, and Keith Kenney. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum. 2005. 141-52.
- Frosh, Paul. 2019. "Image testimonies witnessing in times of social media." In Schankweiler, K. and Straub, V. and Wendi, T. (eds.) *Image Testimony: Witnessing in Times of social media*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019: 121-135.
- Frosh, Paul, and Amit Pinchevski. 2014. "Media witnessing and the ripeness of time." *Cultural Studies* 28 (4):594-610, DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2014.891304.
- Hill, Charles, and Marguerite Helmers. 2004. Defining Visual Rhetoric. 1st Edition. Routledge.
- Holmes, Emily A., and Corrin Bourne. 2008. "Inducing and modulating intrusive emotional memories: a review of the trauma film paradigm." *Acta Psychologica* 127: 553e 566.
- Huxford, John. 2015. "Visual Images in the Media." Elsevier. DOI: 10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.95041-4.
- International News Safety Institute. 2014. "No story is worth dying for: INSI global inquiry into journalist safety." Retrieved from https://newssafety.org/uploads/INSI%20Global%20Inquiry.pdf.
- Keats, Patrice and Marla Buchanan. 2009. "Addressing the effects of assignment stress injury: Canadian journalists' and photojournalists' recommendations." *Journalism Practice* 3(2): 162-177.
- Manfred, J. 2021. *Narratology 2.3: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative*. English Department, University of Cologne. www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.pdf.
- Marsh, Emily, and Domas M. White. 2006. "Content analysis: a flexible method." *Article in library trends June* 2006. DOI: 10.1353/lib.2006.0053. Source: OAI.
- Massé, Mark. H. 2011. Trauma Journalism: On Deadline in harm's way. New York, NY: A&C Black.
- Mayberry, Sean. 2021. "Four facts you didn't know about mental health in Africa." Retrieved from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/08/4-facts-mental-health-africa/.
- Médecins Sans Frontiers 2019. "Displaced and distressed: people's mental health in East Africa." Retrieved from https://www.msf.org/displaced-and-distressed-people%E2%80%99s-mental-health-east-africa.
- Media Council of Kenya. 2016. "The impact of trauma on Kenyan journalists: A baseline survey report." Retrieved from https://www.mediacouncil.or.ke/en/mck/index.php/resources/research-reports/impact-of-trauma-on-kenyan-journalists.
- Mwesigye, Peter and Okello-Orlale Rosemary. 2018. "State of the newsroom: Uganda 2018." Retrieved from https://acme-ug.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/State-of-the-Newsroom-Uganda-2018.pdf.
- Newman, N. 2023. "Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions." *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*.
- Papadopoulou, Lambrini, Theodora A. Maniou and Eleana Pandia. 2022. "Economic crisis and trauma journalism: Assessing the emotional toll of reporting in crisis-ridden countries." *Communications* 47(3): 350–374 https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2020-0050.
- PBS. 1999. Yellow Journalism. Available at: https://www.pbs.org/crucible/journalism.html.
- Polkinghorne, Donald. E. 1989. "Phenomenological research methods." *In Existential phenomenological perspectives in psychology*, pp. 41-60. Springer US.
- Possetti, Julie, Emily Bell, and Peter Brown. 2023. "Journalism and the Pandemic: A Global Snapshot of Impacts." *ICFJ and Tow Center for Digital Journalism*.
- Randy Fox. 2013. Visual rhetoric: an introduction for students of visual communication.
- RSF. 2023. "Reporters Without Borders." Rwanda. https://rsf.org/en/country/rwanda.
- Seely, K. Natalee. 2017. Reporting on trauma: the psychological effects of covering tragedy and violence. Doctoral Dissertation. Chapel Hill. N.C University of North Carolina.