

Alternative Journalism in the Digital Age: Safety and Well-being as the Cornerstone of Resilient Journalism Practice

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Abstract

In authoritarian contexts across the Global South, digitalization has become a crucial condition for the survival of alternative journalism. Faced with censorship, licensing restrictions, economic barriers, and political repression, journalists increasingly rely on digital platforms to produce, circulate, and sustain oppositional news practices. While digitalization has expanded opportunities for journalistic visibility and participation, it has simultaneously intensified risks through surveillance, online harassment, platform dependency, and precarious labor. Against this backdrop, this study argues that prevailing approaches to journalism safety, focused primarily on physical, legal, and digital threats, remain insufficient without accounting for journalists' mental, emotional, and embodied well-being. Drawing on the Well-Being with Arts (WBA) framework, the study reconceptualizes journalism safety as a multidimensional condition that includes internal resilience alongside external protection. The study uses qualitative and quantitative data from 37 journalists in Turkey, a country marked by low press freedom. The analysis examines three interrelated dimensions: journalists' demographic and professional vulnerabilities; perceived safety threats and their institutional sources; and well-being practices developed in response to chronic insecurity. Findings reveal high exposure to legal, political, digital, and workplace threats, resulting in stress, emotional exhaustion, and self-censorship. At the same time, journalists actively cultivate resilience through embodied, creative, social, and digital self-care practices, including artistic expression, physical activity, peer solidarity, and digital hygiene. The study demonstrates that in digitally authoritarian media environments, well-being functions not only as a coping mechanism but as a form of everyday resistance. It concludes by advocating a well-being-centred safety paradigm that integrates digital risk awareness, institutional care, and creative practices into sustainable journalism policy and practice.

Keywords: digitalization, journalism, multidimensional, professional vulnerabilities