Journalists at the frontline: recognizing and managing emotions in the face of conflict and terrorism in Burkina Faso

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Abstract

This article explores how Burkinabè journalists working in security-challenged regions of Burkina Faso, West Africa, express their emotions about their work, in a context of permanent threat. It attempts an original theoretical and methodological proposal. Theoretically, it links the contributions of the emotional turn in journalism to studies into the sociology of risk. Methodologically, it uses a "fieldwork in delegation" approach, or an original and specific collective research approach, involving three focus groups and 37 interviews with Burkinabè journalists. The results highlight 4 main forms of professional adjustment that are emerging in the current context of crisis. These adjustments are: 1) adjustments for and within the profession, 2) professional adjustments (relating to working and employment conditions and journalistic practices), 3) media adjustments (relating to media companies and their practical and economic functioning), and 4) professional values adjustments. The article demonstrates that the Burkinabè journalists' current attempt to manage risk and emotion is rooted in the role they traditionally intend to play, but also in the new responsibilities they wish to assume in the current security context.

Keywords: Burkina Faso (Africa), conflict, emotion, risk, community radio, radio journalism

Since 2015 and the rise of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Islamist groups in the “three-borders” zone joining Mali, Niger, and Burkina, the whole population, including journalists, have been living in a country in conflict where all their usual activities are at risk. 2015 constituted a moment of rupture between a "before", characterised by the cohabitation of different religious communities and peace, and an "after" marked by terrorist violence, community-based conflict and instability (Ouedraogo 2020). The terrorist threat has destabilised the whole country, from the successive governments to the daily life of villagers. Within just a decade, national institutions have been overthrown by a popular uprising in 2014 and by two coups d’état in 2022. One also failed in 2015. Each time, the putschists justified overthrowing a regime because of the latter’s failure to manage the terrorist threat. Today, the extremist armed groups reportedly control about 40% of the country. “Hundreds of attacks on civilians and military targets by armed groups in 10 of Burkina Faso’s 13 regions markedly intensified a humanitarian crisis and brought the total number of people internally displaced since 2016 to nearly 2 million, or just under 10 percent of the population.”[1]

This situation raises questions that directly affect the safety of journalists, an area of research that has been widely explored in recent years (Jamil 2018 & 2019; Ogunmefun & Akeem 2020), especially in conflict zones (Høiby & Ottosen, 2019). "Threats to safety drive journalists to self-censorship and to use extreme caution" (Waisbord 2022), and these attacks are becoming increasingly complex. They are obviously physical (fear for their lives, physical harm), but also very largely psychological (Feinstein and Nicolson 2005; Feinstein, Owen and Blair 2002). War zones are evidently a place of significant danger for journalists who risk being taken hostage or losing their lives (Bizimana 2006). Research has largely focused on war correspondents (Bizimana 2006; 2014). But recent work is attentive to local and national journalists who experience long-term risk situations on a daily basis (Cottle, Sambrook and Mosdell, 2016; Relly Zanger and Fahmy 2015). This goes beyond physical risks to include that of associated emotions. Heightened feelings of anxiety, excitement, guilt and fear amongst war correspondents have been widely discussed (McLaughlin 2016; Rentschler, 2007; Thompson 2019; Tumber and Webster 2006), with emotional trauma amongst journalists in conflict and the resulting post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to Feinstein et al. (2002), being comparable to that of combat veterans. Others have discussed various coping strategies to combat such emotions, which, according to Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen (2011), are often perceived as a form of irrationality. These can include detachment (Ahmed 2014: 64; Wetherell 2012: 27), professionalism (Gregory 2019), and being part of journalists’ ‘practical

[1] https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/burkina-faso

ethical reasoning' (Stupart 2021: 270), all suggesting that emotions are a self—or culturally—imposed interference into reasoned decision-making.

Research aims to understand the forms of physical and psychological violence to which news sources, media, journalists and others working in security-challenged areas are exposed or subjected, the psychological and professional implications of this, and the coping mechanisms, resilience and resistance they develop to deal with it. This article explores how journalists working in security-challenged regions of Burkina Faso express their feelings about their work. It brings together the contributions of the emotional turn in journalism studies (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020) and studies in the sociology of risk (Lupton, 2006) and particularly the calculation of risk in individuals (Harris & Williams, 2018). The link between these two research streams allows us to question how journalists and local and community radio hosts in conflict-affected regions in Burkina Faso express and manage their emotions and their relationship to their daily journalistic and media work.

This article is structured in three parts: the first section is a synthesis of academic work on emotions and risks; the second presents the methodology based on three focus groups and 37 interviews with Burkinabè journalists; and the third highlights 4 forms of professional adjustment, which have emerged in the context of the current crisis. These are 1) adjustments for and within the profession, 2) professional adjustments (relating to working and employment conditions and journalistic practices), 3) media adjustments (relating to media companies and their practical and economic functioning) and 4) professional values adjustments.

Emotions and risks

As we witness the "emotional turn" in journalism practices (Kotišová 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen 2019), we also note that the interrelationship between journalism and emotions has been studied in various contexts for example during the pandemic (Osmann, Selva and Feinstein 2021), in trauma studies, and psychiatry (e.g., Aoki, et al, 2013), psychology in relation to User Generated Content—photos and videos submitted to newsrooms by the public (Feinstein, Audet and Waknine 2015), and even changes in journalism practice associated with technology (Beckett & Deuze 2016). But less research has been conducted into the study of the relations that journalists build with their own emotions, the way they feel the work situations, and the way they experience the contexts.

Within the field of journalism, multiple terms—emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), moral injury, affect (Feinstein et al 2018), as just some examples—are now used to express the many aspects of emotions that journalists may experience. Hochschild's (1979) definition of labour as an exploitative aspect of work leading to alienation and fatigue needs further examination by placing it in a context of conflict reporting by

local, rather than international, journalists and the risks they face that are intertwined with these emotions. In a previous study (Le Cam and Ruellan 2017), we investigated what emotions respond to. We explored the concept of 'emotricity' to describe the way emotions are not only felt, but how they serve the journalist, and are, in some ways, the driving force behind the commitment to, or discontinuance of, journalism practice. However, few studies have directly observed the relationship that local journalists (and not foreign correspondents or special envoys) build with emotions. When a journalist belongs to an exposed, violent territory, they stay there not only to continue their work as a journalist to spread information, but possibly because this work also gives them a social position accompanied by a means of subsistence. The relationship to emotions appears to take on other meanings than the relationship that journalists from the North may have with the emotions they feel, hence our original way of analysing the situation of journalists in Burkina Faso in articulating the sociology of emotions with the sociology of risk.

Perspectives on emotions

Are emotions an intrinsic part of journalism or is the relationship between practice and emotions akratic, as Stupart (2021) claims in his study in South Sudan? Maintaining an emotional distance when reporting on conflict or traumatic events is far from simple given its varied, complex and contextually defined nature (Stupart 2021). Knight (2020), as just one example, discussed how UK journalists reporting on cases of genocide managed their emotions in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. There has been a softening of approaches with regard to emotions and reporting and a highlighting of the intersection of emotionality and journalistic professionalism. As Wahl-Jorgensen notes, norms are being "collaboratively constructed in ways that blend conventional facts-based information with personal experience, subjective opinion and emotion" (2016: 20). However, this is often more prevalent in countries where emotions, mental health and well-being are recognised within the society where a journalist works. Foreign correspondents working in war zones, for example, may be provided mental health support before, during and after missions. As Knight (2020) suggested, correspondents acknowledged the value of emotions mostly as expressions of professionalism. But the situation may differ for local, rather than international, journalists reporting from their own region, and on the destruction of their own towns or massacres of their own communities which is the case in this article. Our aim here is to examine the case of journalists working in their own communities—in Burkina Faso in this case—where conflict dominates and where emotional well-being is scarcely acknowledged as a reality with little support being available. In this perspective this research draws on the analyses carried out by researchers who have been interested in the media and journalists in this region of the continent for decades. They have highlighted the importance of radio for the continent as a whole (Tudesq 1998) and for Burkina Faso in particular (Capitant 2008), the way journalistic ethics

and political debate interact (Frère 2000), the socio-economic functioning of the media in Burkina (Balima and Frère 2003), and the impact of the internet and social networks on the circulation of information in Burkina (Frère 2014). It also draws on studies of the links between media and conflict in Central Africa (Frère 2005) to fill a gap in the existing literature, the one concerning the place of radio in the current conflict in Burkina Faso.

Further are the personal attributes of journalists and whether, order to manage their emotions, they are "cool-detached" and "cynical" when facing traumatic situations (Kotišová's 2017a, 2017b) or whether they display 'rugged masculinity' in a stoic culture (Palmer and Melki 2018). However, the image of the heroic masculinity of reporters (Rentschler 2007) can challenge the emotion of individual journalists, especially in a context where trauma or emotions are barely recognised. This may force them to manage and 'suspend' their emotions rather than seek help to maintain a more socially acceptable 'keeping it together' appearance. This is particularly relevant in the context of patriarchal Burkina Faso where societal norms define clear roles for men and women and also where gendered behavioural stereotypes prevail. Whilst it is widely assumed, stereotypically, that women, of all ages, classes and locations, are emotional, this is not the case for men who are caught within hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). As Buchanan & Keats (2011) and Pedelty (1995) note, PTSD, for example, has been widely considered a taboo topic which journalists should not express for fear of appearing weak and not capable of doing the job, but how do they deal with the rupture between and the inseparability of their personal and professional identities? In other words, it is necessary to make emotionality viable as an occupational norm but to achieve this changes are required on individual, organisational and society levels (Schmidt 2021: 1174).

Calculation of risk

Whilst emotions play a significant role in conflict reporting as discussed above and is being increasingly considered, the calculation and management of risk is also an important part of the professional culture and organisational structure of journalism (Harris & Williams 2018) and should not be ignored. However, unlike other professional groups, there is little research into how journalists manage risk in their day-to-day work (Hughes & Márquez-Ramírez 2017). However, some studies have examined the challenges, risks and practices of war correspondents in the field (Seib 2006). Others have addressed practices designed to reduce risk that include group working and working with local journalists (Tumber & Webster 2006; Tumber & Palmer 2004). In Mexico, for example, qualitative studies have shown that in areas of high violence and risk, journalists there make individual or collective decisions about what to self-censor, opting not to conduct certain dangerous street reporting or even withholding information from suspicious people in their own newsrooms (Hughes

&Márquez-Ramírez 2017: 501). Research highlights that many newspaper outlets in Mexico in the most dangerous areas have established policies of censoring coverage related to drug gangs and gang-related government corruption (González de Bustamante & Relly 2014). Recently, scholars (Urbániková & Haniková 2022; Waisbord 2022) have investigated some of the strategies adopted by media professionals to deal with the risks they are increasingly exposed to in various parts of the world.

When discussing the topic of risk calculation and risk management by journalists working in violent contexts, one question that arises is whether potential threats to safety lead journalists to adapt their practices by engaging in self-censorship, ultimately giving biased or limited information to the public (Walulya and Nassanga 2020). In response to the various threats, research shows that journalists do not necessarily turn to silence but may adapt their journalistic practices by choosing other methods and routines, turning to other sources, reporting without a byline (Westlund, Krøvel and Skare Orgeret 2022: 1819). Nevertheless, some journalists stop covering certain topics or even abandon their journalistic career altogether (Stahel and Schoen 2020) when faced with certain risks.

Available research also suggests that when journalists face stressful and traumatic situations; when they or their colleagues have been the target of attacks, threats, intimidation, and violence they often resort to denial and avoidance strategies. They operate on 'autopilot' and control their emotions and memories to distance themselves from the situation (Urbániková & Haniková 2022: 1931). The aim of this article, to bring together risk and emotion in journalism, is therefore evident.

Interaction between emotion and risk

Both the concepts of risk and emotion have been the subject of much research in the social sciences in recent decades (Lupton 2013). Indeed, some social theorists such as Beck (1992, 2009, 2011) and Giddens (2009) have argued that the concept of risk has acquired a particular resonance and dominance in the later modern era due to widespread anxiety and fear and that we live in uncertain times. Others, as Deborah Lupton (2013) points out, have suggested that these feelings have been exacerbated by the environmental disasters, global financial crises and terrorist attacks of the early years of this century. Yet, despite these claims, the relationship between risk and emotion remains under-theorised (Lupton 2013) with the exception of psychological research. In sum, although the sociology of emotion and the sociology of risk are the subject of much work, there has been little exchange between the two concepts to date. It is this articulation between emotions and risks that we want to establish in this research.

Authors such as Paul Slovic et al. (2006) propose that emotion plays an important role in guiding judgements or decisions, acting as a form of 'mental shortcut' to make these judgements or decisions quickly. With specific reference to risk, emotion is positioned as contributing to a linear process of individuals' thought processes in their risk responses and identification (Lupton 2013: 635).

In this article, we argue, following Lupton (2013), that the terminology of 'emotion-risk assemblage' can be a useful entry point for thinking about the complexities of risk and emotion in journalism practice in the context of terrorism in Burkina Faso. The concept of assemblage has been mobilised by authors from both the risk literature (Van Loon 2002, Lupton 2013) and the emotion literature (Blackman and Venn 2010). Through this combination of the two concepts of 'emotion-risk', we consider that emotion and risk interact with each other. In doing so, they configure each other. Thus, emotions create risks and risks create emotions. The aim of this research on community radio journalists acting in a context of terrorist risk in Burkina Faso is to study how risks act on emotions and vice versa and what these ‘assemblages’ “do” to journalism as a profession and a practice. We wanted to better understand not only the journalistic practices deployed in areas of high security deficit, but also the way journalists live these situations on a daily basis, and how they manage their emotions and those of others.

Methodologically explore emotions and risks

The research team comprised a researcher and two doctoral students from Burkina Faso, two researchers from Belgium and a researcher from the United Kingdom. To meet our objective, it was crucial to interview media actors working in conflict and terrorism contexts. But for security reasons, it was impossible for us to physically go there. These concrete aspects shaped our methodology. We developed an original, exploratory and collaborative methodological process in the form of a co-research approach (Binet, Rullac and Pinto 2020; Maréchal, et al. 2022) conducted in close partnership with Burkinabe field journalists, allowing us to overcome two main issues. First, at the time of the research, the five high security zones were inaccessible to both local and foreign researchers; second, the situations encountered by journalists in these areas are violent and conducting interviews with them without deep knowledge of daily living conditions can impact negatively individuals (Gaujelac and Laroche, 2020).

A three-stage methodological design

This co-research is based on a three-stage methodological design: a) identification of the targeted radio b) fieldwork in delegation, and c) collective feedback workshop.

a) Identifying the radios

We first identified the 11 main community radio stations in the five regions with the highest insecurity levels in Burkina Faso: Sahel, North, Centre-North, Boucle du Mouhoun, and East. All have been confronted, to varying degrees, with violence and terrorism since 2015.

b) Fieldwork “in delegation”

The managers of the 11 community radio stations in the five above-mentioned regions were contacted individually by the research team. They were asked to identify individuals, amongst their journalists, who themselves would be responsible for contacting and interviewing colleagues from the targeted radio stations. For the purposes of our original methodology, we called the journalists responsible for interviewing colleagues “journalists-interviewers”. 11 journalists-interviewers were eventually recruited and paid for the research’s purpose. All of the journalists-interviewers identified by their hierarchy were men. The absence of women is due to, on the one hand, the low number of women who occupy leadership positions in the media and, on the other hand, by the patriarchal system that characterised both the Burkinabè society as a whole and the social organisation of the Burkinabè media that gives more authority and speaking opportunities to men than to women (Orgeret 2016; 2018). As the recruitment required approval from managers, it was impossible for us to correct this bias.

Research team developed an interview guide to be used by the 11 journalists-interviewers during the interviews with community radio journalists and aiming at understanding, in the context of the terrorist attacks perpetrated since 2015, the forms of violence suffered and the risks incurred, the psychological and professional traces of this violence and these risks on journalists. During an online meeting, the journalists-interviewers and the research team discussed this interview guide. The first were also socialised in the research interview technique. The 11 journalists-interviewers eventually conducted 33 interviews, from February to May 2022, either face-to-face or remotely via phone call or WhatsApp, for security or travel reasons. They were all recorded and transcribed by the interviewers. The average duration per interview varied between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviews conducted by journalists-interviewers were variable in nature. Accelerated interview training was indeed beneficial, but not sufficient.

c) Collective feedback workshop

In May 2022, once these interviews had been completed, all of the journalists-interviewers and the research team gathered at a two-day workshop in Ziniare, a city near the capital Ouagadougou. The president of the Burkina Faso journalists' association had also been invited. This workshop had two objectives: the first was to collectively debrief and discuss the interviews conducted in the field by the journalists-investigators; and the second was to allow the latter to share their own

experiences and representations and, in so doing, to further the reflection. Three methodological tools were used during these two days:

- Plenary sessions that allowed collective feedback and sharing
- Focus groups (3) simultaneously organised, comprising 4 to 5 journalists-interviewers and facilitated by members of the research team. Each focus group was dedicated to one theme: the consequences of the security crisis on the daily work; the professional management of violence; the emotions experienced.
- Individual interviews with volunteers among the participants to the workshop (4), conducted by members of the research group with the interview guide used by the journalists-interviewers.

Added value of the collective research

Co-opting the journalists-interviewers into the process allowed the research team to access the voices of people working in the five risk areas. It became possible to interview them through colleagues living in the same personal and professional conditions, which contributed to the emergence of issues that might have remained invisible without co-option. Moreover, the collective exchanges were much more than moments of restitution and discussion. They allowed both the research team and the journalists-interviewers to demonstrate methodological reflexivity. This methodological approach, which the research team was deploying for the first time, will be the subject of a later specific article in order to draw lessons from these choices.

Results

The interviews described the simultaneous management of risks and emotions and demonstrated that feeling emotions in a context of risk enables actions and behaviour to be adjusted. Four forms of more specific readjustments revealed traceable consequences of the changes in the profession and in the relationship to the profession and were reported in detail by the journalists interviewed: adjustments for and within the profession, professional adjustments (relating to working and employment conditions and journalistic practices), media adjustments (relating to media companies and their practical and economic functioning) and professional ideology adjustments (relating to the values attached to the profession).

Adjustments to and of oneself

The first form of adjustment of the journalists' experience comes from the individual themselves and the traces that the journalists' feelings leave on themselves. Community radio journalists have been living with the security crisis since 2015 and most of them experience it on a daily basis at various levels of the job: production,

processing, broadcasting, and also outside of working hours. The terror manifests itself in various forms: fear, psychosis, stress, anxiety, nightmare and all the traces on the individual (stomach ache or insomnia) in a state of shock or trauma. These feelings trigger the journalist to make decisions to avoid or circumvent risks: to say this or that, to take or not to take a particular road for example. This results in the existence of close links between emotions as "a broad meaning, including feelings and affects, which refers to the register of the felt, the 'lived', the experienced, the body and its manifestations" (Fortino, Jeantet and Tcholakova 2015) and the risks associated with the individual's behaviours and actions. The narratives highlight this consubstantial or interdependent relationship. Risk management and emotion management are intertwined. Emotions therefore condition a certain representation of risk. Thus, one of the journalists warned of the risks, distancing himself from the need to encounter them, while showing the emotions that some people might feel:

> As we're not war journalists. And nothing is worth a life. That's what I keep telling people. There is no glory in being murdered by these men, I wouldn't say lawless, but still. There is no glory in that. (FG1)

The ultimate risk all the journalists interviewed run is death. The feelings, fears and stress they experience are expressed in the form of a risk, and not the least of which is losing one's life. This physical risk does not only affect the journalist, but can also affect their media, colleagues, and relatives. Journalists must adjust to their personal emotions, but also to those of their colleagues, and to the risks they run and those who run them. Working as a journalist in the context of Burkina Faso's current security means being in constant anxiety. Insecurity is a source of emotions, but emotions enable the security of the individual, the group and the family. Risks appear as a socially constructed relationship between the journalist, their colleagues and family. Thinking about being kidnapped by armed terrorist groups, for example, is like predicting that you will no longer be alive and becomes a source of strong emotions and anguish.

> Once I was coming back from a report and had to go through a village that had become a terrorist headquarters. That day, the terrorists were checking everyone as they passed and people were killed. I arrived just after they left. When I think that it could have been me, I feel sick. I think about it all the time; it traumatises me, I find it hard to forget. (E1)

In addition to this physical risk, emotions generate changes in the journalist's relationship to his or her profession and professional practices. As we shall see, they give rise to a recontextualisation or even a reconceptualisation of professional issues resulting in self-censorship and/or a modification of professional routines and cultures.

Professional adjustments

The second form of adjustment concerns working and employment conditions. Working in a high-risk environment has practical implications for journalist's daily life. If they are paid per article produced, or if they receive a 'small envelope' from sources, any drastic reduction in the opportunities to cover events and the events themselves has direct consequences on the journalists' pay. Moreover, high-risk areas sometimes drive away international or humanitarian organisations, along with any advertising revenue, which means that journalists and media can no longer be financially supported:

> If there's no production, it's difficult to continue getting paid. The journalist's job has become difficult. They're no longer employed. If there's no income coming into the media, it goes without saying that what remains will go on electricity and water charges and we may run out of resources. (E4)

These employment conditions underpin the need to find alternative sources of income. They create an uncertain environment, which in turn can leave a mark (including an emotional one) on the journalist without the ability to support themselves or their families.

Field practices are also changing. The risks incurred, or the anticipation of risks to be incurred or avoided, the fear of taking a particular route, of expressing an opinion about the situation, of overstepping the role of the moderator or journalist, condition the way in which journalists work. Journalists describe these constraints both in terms of their perception of danger and their daily experience, which manifests itself in lack of sleep, fears and anxieties as we saw in the previous section. However, most of the journalists describe these difficulties in a more roundabout way by talking about the daily practices of handling information, which range from the difficulty of making contact with sources and their audiences (E5) to the consequences of feeling insecure:

> Nowadays, it must be said that it's difficult because people are afraid to express themselves, because they're really insecure. So I can say [...] that insecurity has had an impact on the processing of local information. The second point that needs to be made is that information creates insecurity, so we have to be very careful about giving out information so as not to glorify terrorist groups. So at this level, we really need to be careful [...] to see if the angle we use for this information can really provide information. Without also apologising for terrorism.(E15)

These conditions lead to a relatively shared practice, which is a question of language. The fear of reprisals, the knowledge that they are being listened to, and the explosive nature of certain situations or events lead to self-censorship by journalists who do not

wish to use a particular term or name, and to constantly adjusting their discourse to the situation. No general rule seems to have been imposed by the hierarchy or others, but 'red lines' have been drawn by the terrorists, more or less explicitly. Journalists know, for example, that they are putting themselves in danger if they use the word "terrorist", instead of the acronym HANI for "Hommes armés non identifiés" [unidentified armed men]; if they deal with subjects related to reproductive health, women's rights, or the Burkinabe state—considered an enemy by the terrorists—or education outside of Islam, and if they offer live interactive broadcasts during which these subjects could be discussed by listeners.

Journalists talk about the caution with which they have to express themselves, and with which they can let others express themselves. This foresight is linked to the risks involved and to protecting themselves and others:

> So, here are a certain number of precautions that journalists take, in addition to processing of information, where you have to choose the right words. You mustn't say things at random. [...] There are terminologies or expressions like 'man without faith or law', we see that in the Ouagadougou media, we don't know those terms. We don't know these terms. So we don't use judgmental terms because we say to ourselves that we only have one weapon, and that is the pen, the microphone. It's not up to us to make a direct attack. We're not, we don't have a kalash. That's for the police, the gendarmerie. (FG1)

Media readjustments

Two perceptible forms of media readjustment emerge: that related to the journalistic and editorial collective; and that related to the organisation of the media system itself.

Several journalists stress the need for professional solidarity, which consists not only of sharing information (on locations, attacks, risks incurred), exchanging information on channels such as Whatsapp, etc., but above all of offering a potential space for exchanges on the way journalists experience risks. It is therefore not simply a question of circulating information on the conditions of the practice, but of creating spaces for conversation around feelings and emotions:

> Because I myself, as the person in charge of the radio, find that radio, the colleagues, is the most important family. If you don't have trust between colleagues, I don't think you can develop together. So this state of mind has encouraged people to trust each other. They even prefer to confide in each other within the editorial office than to go and confide in someone else in town. Being used to working together, they have developed a family atmosphere. So the editorial meeting and the meetings within the radio station

> are the frameworks to discuss the security issue, to give each other tips and to persuade each other not to live their fears alone, but to share their fears with others. (FG3)

However, these statements should not hide the fact that individual situations can be very varied, depending on editorial offices, the risk context and the individual. However, the situations themselves echo each other. Loneliness weighs heavily on some, and psychological help is either absent, little sought after or unknown. And yet, in their testimonies, the journalists leave marks not only of the way they try to deal with their emotions, but also of the marks that these leave on their lives.

> You're there, during the night, you see that they've said that there are 100 terrorist groups already positioned in such and such a place and that they're planning to attack the city. You can't sleep. It's a permanent psychosis, not to use nightmare terms. So it's feelings like that, that we permanently experienced at local level. And that leads to self-restraint. So we tend to be a bit reserved. We don't want to show ourselves. We're even afraid to put our voice on the air often, to avoid giving our position in real time. (FG2)

The media world itself deals with emotions and risks. The insecurity has forced journalists and media companies to suspend programmes (especially interactive ones). In some radio stations, it led to journalists suspending certain programmes, mainly interactive ones, to synchronising with international or national radio stations based in Ouagadougou, or to using journalistic subtlety in the form of positive or neutral words to describe the crisis. For some, the risk is so great that it has forced journalists to resign, move or retrain (Author XXX). It is worth noting that risk and emotions lead journalists to make a variety of decisions: to readapt in order to survive the crisis or to give up the profession in order to live. Many journalists no longer live in the localities where their radio stations are based. Some are temporarily based in Ouagadougou, hoping to see the country regain security before returning. Others have migrated to neighbouring provinces that are relatively less affected, adding to the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The permanence of the crisis leads journalists to absorb the risks and emotions. But, at the same time, it also makes it possible, in a false paradox, to reassure certain values and to rebuild their attachment.

Value adjustments

In this context of psychological and physical insecurity, the discourse of all the journalists we met revealed the values that underpin their attachment to the profession and the job. While some admitted to being demotivated, the majority affirmed their desire to continue practising journalism and claimed to be able to adapt (E33).

Their discourse is articulated around notions such as pride—that of exercising a profession that they consider useful for the Burkinabe population, or pleasure—that of being a source of hope for the public. For one of these media actors, a journalist is a person capable of "distilling good humour, hope and life" to people in distress (E4). Many regions are totally isolated from the rest of the country and their inhabitants are cut off from all social relations. Journalists consider that their productions compensate for the lack of contacts and prevent these people from becoming despondent:

> Imagine, then, when a curfew is announced, everyone's at home, with their doors closed. Who's there to accompany the people, if not the journalist through his productions? That he can accompany people in their daily lives, that he can show them that, despite everything, there's life, that he can show them that on the other side of the world, there's something positive going on to give them a taste for life. (FG1)

> It's said that the journalist's family is up there with the military family. We just don't wear the uniform. (FG2)

"Love of the job"(E8), "passion" (E33), "pride" (E11), "nobility" (E5), "feeling of usefulness" are some of the reasons given by journalists to affirm their dedication, despite the physical and psychological risks involved.

Journalists' commitment is based on their relationship with their audiences. The crisis has highlighted their social utility, which they consider to be indispensable. This is symbolic when it comes to informing isolated citizens and fighting against the feeling of abandonment (E3).

> Sometimes there are people who say, 'this morning you brought me out of my sadness', and I know I've had a useful day". (E7)

But their usefulness can also take very practical forms. The information they circulate warns the population of imminent dangers (E1), in local languages (E4) and can therefore save lives (E13). Their networks and knowledge of the terrain also enable them to reunite families who have been dispersed throughout the country because of the conflict (FG1).

The crisis, with all its risks and emotions, therefore makes their professional values even more pronounced, enriches their discourse on commitment and fuels their determination. For, as one of them put it, "if we are committed, we must go all the way and nothing should stop us, neither the difficulties nor the criticism" (E6).

Discussion

Burkinabe radio stations have been studied, as has the link between media and conflict in Central Africa. However, the "new security situation" has created new professional realities for Burkinabe journalists, which have not yet been widely investigated. We questioned this "new order" through the prism of combining "risks" and "emotions". We begin by looking back at two original features that are at the heart of the research as it is currently emerging, and then present the effects of the risk-emotion entanglement on journalism.

The first of these distinctive features is that our research focuses on local journalists working in conflict areas—i.e. culturally and socially integrated into the geographical area affected by the conflict in which they are working—and that it differs significantly from studies focusing on war journalists and correspondents (Janvier, 2008; Bizimana, 2006, 2010 and 2014), or on the growing topic of humanitarian reporting where foreign journalists parachute in (see Scott et al. 2023), and whose exposure to violence on the ground is temporary. The back and forth between war and non-war terrain is a specific configuration, which does not work or mobilise emotions and risk perception in the same way. Here, the field is similar to studies conducted in Mexico or Iraq, for example (Cottle et al. 2016; Relly et al. 2015), but with a strong particularity: the economic and working conditions diverge from those of other countries.

In Burkina Faso, as in many countries in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, community radio stations and their journalists are in an extremely precarious situation. Not only are these journalists not trained in the basics of journalism, but their employment conditions are also deplorable with no contract or fixed salary, lack of equipment and difficulties in travelling, for example. The conflict situation in Burkina Faso is not only synonymous with risks to journalists' lives and safety, but also with risks which range from a drop in or lack of income to the transformation of their relationship with the public, when, for example, they are forced to suspend interactive programmes. Emotional security is as important as financial security, both of which can have serious consequences for the individual. Furthermore, and this is another distinctive feature, journalists here experience the same situations as the public, in a form of affective proximity (Al Ghazzi 2021: 2) that has effects on themselves and their work.

The second original feature of this research is our methodological approach. Analysing the field by weaving together emotions and risks has allowed us to highlight adjustments in discourse and practices, as well as professional values, of which the journalists themselves are not always aware. The results we have presented show that 'the emotion-risk assemblage' (Lupton 2006; 2013) allows us to better understand the identity practices and discourses of 'conflict' journalists in the regions of Burkina Faso. These journalists have been forced to reconceptualise their role from

being local/community journalists in a peace context to conflict journalists now in a conflict context.

The urgent need for survival and to continue working left the journalists with cognitive availability or time to think about this evolution, which they therefore generally 'absorb'. The moment of shared feedback also often became a time for testimonies, confidences, and intimate exchanges, as if being in this safe space surrounded by peers and researchers enabled a more direct expression of reflections and feelings that might otherwise never have been expressed. The journalists shaped the direction of the research, and for some of them, it also opened a door for testimony and exchange. This methodology thus made it possible to bridge the gap between the researcher and respondent, sometimes socially and culturally distant, and also amongst the respondents, making the interview relationship a social one (Papinot 2014) and placing the research in a process of 'participatory objectification' (Bourdieu 2003). However, not all the interviewees were paid, only the journalists-interviewers. They were paid for their work and for the workshops (to compensate for their lack of salary), but also to avoid global extraction by Global North researchers (Madianou 2019). This protocol also made it possible to observe how journalists position themselves in relation to a research project that concerns them directly. Their testimonies, during the collective moment of feedback, complemented their observations from the field, during interviews with the journalists-investigators, which also shed light on their professional identities. These results, above all, allow us to promote further reflection on how risks act on emotions and vice versa and what this does to journalists and journalism.

Expressing emotional distress and possible trauma, or even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is still barely heard of in public and especially amongst male voices in Burkina Faso (we will come back to this, but the discussion space created during the workshops was rather an opening and a space for exchange from this point of view). Studies show that journalists are prone to PTSD (Buchanan & Keats 2011), and that mental health problems (Aoki, Malcolm et al. 2013) are also significant (Lee et al. 2018). Yet, talking about violence, reporting on it, continuing to be a journalist in these contexts also contributes, as our results show, to strengthening journalists' attachment to their profession, legitimising and consolidating their roles, making certain values stronger, visible and defensible (Anderson 2019; Bolton & Boyd 2003).

Conclusion

This research shows that journalists' exposure to terrorist violence gives rise to a simultaneous management of risk and emotions and it makes a significant contribution to knowledge in the fields of emotions, risk, journalism, and Africa studies. This research supports the idea that emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) is constrained here by risks, and that these risks constrain emotional labour. The hypothesis of constraint

further underlines the violence of the situation. Many of the individuals we met had no choice but to forget what they had seen; they often had no choice for their family or their future; and they had little choice when they had to move away. This hypothesis of constraint seems to distinguish the work on journalists' emotions from the idea raised by this article and others: the unavoidable cost of this assemblage. This cost is both personal and professional for journalists. It is a cost to the media business, to the ways in which it is organised, and to the survival of the media. But it is also a cost for information, its quality, its distribution, its reception, and therefore for the production and circulation of information of public interest and for the capacity of citizen audiences to understand events. These results are specific to a geographically and temporally situated social microcosm but are part of a long-term political and media evolution. They could, however, constitute a basis for reflection for those interested in journalists working in conflict zones elsewhere in the world. The specificity of the subject studied means that we must avoid any idea of universalizing or generalising the results of the research. Rather, it invites us to continue to reflect on the same social and geographical microcosm, but this time from a gender perspective to see how the articulation of risks and emotions manifests itself among women journalists and what this entails in terms of professional, behavioural and psychological changes.

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