

Expert Report Syndicate 2: Teaching trauma in journalism schools across cultures and nations: Finding a common ground

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Mental health challenges faced by journalists, including burnout, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), have received growing scholarly attention in recent years (e.g. Osmann et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2024). Like other first responders, journalists are frequently exposed to traumatic events, yet few journalism programs adequately address the psychological risks associated with such reporting. Mental well-being education remains largely absent from journalism curricula, despite the increasing recognition of the need for trauma literacy in both scholarly and professional circles. Trauma education within journalism classrooms is often inconsistent, reactive, and underdeveloped. As students are routinely assigned to cover tragic or violent events early in their careers, this lack of preparation presents a critical pedagogical gap (Dworznik & Garvey, 2019; Newman et al., 2023). Young reporters are commonly tasked with covering beats involving crime, disaster, and human suffering—assignments often considered foundational to early newsroom experience—without receiving meaningful instruction in trauma-informed practices (Dworznik & Garvey, 2019; Seely, 2020). Consequently, many of these journalists enter the field vulnerable to psychological strain and ill-equipped to engage with victims and communities affected by trauma ethically.

Studies show that trauma is either excluded entirely from journalism curricula or limited to brief discussions in broader ethics or reporting courses (Seely, 2019). Dworznik and Garvey (2019) found that only one of forty-one accredited journalism schools in the United States offered a specific course on trauma reporting. Ogunyemi and Price's (2023) global survey of 119 journalism educators further highlights the extent of the issue: while 86% of educators reported awareness of trauma-related risks, only 26% had received any

training themselves, and just 14.6% believed their students were adequately prepared for trauma exposure. Similarly, in Macedonia, students acknowledged the emotional toll of trauma reporting but pointed out a lack of formal instruction in handling such experiences (Markovikj & Serafimovska, 2023).

To advance the field, journalism education must adopt a more interdisciplinary and inclusive approach to trauma literacy. Scholars increasingly advocate for curricula that integrate perspectives from psychology and ethics to help students understand trauma not merely as an individual experience but also as a societal phenomenon (Seely, 2020; Ogunyemi & Price, 2023). Such approaches would not only promote student well-being but also foster more ethical, empathetic, and trauma-sensitive reporting. As Seely (2019) argues, embedding trauma literacy early in journalism education helps normalize conversations around mental health and equips future journalists with both the conceptual tools and practical vocabulary necessary to navigate emotionally complex assignments.

The **central question** the members of this syndicate will discuss and answer is:
“How can journalism teachers effectively teach mental wellbeing in their classes?”

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