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# DIGITALIZATION AND JOURNALISTS IN THE BRICS COUNTRIES

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Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo

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**ABSTRACT** - The article explores the social profile of journalists and their well-being in the profession within the context of the digitalization of their profession. The analysis focuses on five aspects of the qualitative (in-depth interview) study of BRICS journalists carried out between 2012 and 2015 under funding from the Academy of Finland. The aspects of interest are: workplace preference (traditional or online news), education, professional age, gender, and well-being. The BRICS study sample includes 729 journalists representing both traditional (484 respondents) and online news media (245 respondents) from twenty cities, ten metropolitan and ten provincial. The comparative analysis across the five BRICS countries reveals some connections between digitalization and the journalists' profile and well-being and also specifies the political, economic and social-professional conditions in which the journalists work and live.

**Key words:** New Technology. Journalism Demographics. Comparative Qualitative Study. BRICS

## A DIGITALIZAÇÃO E OS JORNALISTAS NOS PAÍSES DO BRICS

**RESUMO** - Este artigo explora o perfil social dos jornalistas e bem estar na profissão no contexto da digitalização. A análise se concentra em cinco aspectos de um estudo qualitativo (entrevistas em profundidade) dos jornalistas do BRICS conduzido entre 2012 e 2015 sob financiamento da Academy of Finland. Os aspectos analisados foram: preferência em relação ao local de trabalho (veículos tradicionais ou on-line), formação, idade profissional, gênero e bem estar. A amostra do estudo sobre o BRICS incluiu 729 jornalistas representativos tanto da mídia tradicional (484 respondentes) como da on-line (245 respondentes). Eles estavam distribuídos em 20 cidades, dez de caráter metropolitano e dez provinciais. A análise comparativa nos cinco países BRICS revela algumas conexões entre a digitalização e o perfil dos jornalistas bem como o bem estar deles e as condições políticas, econômicas e sócio-profissionais específicas nas quais eles vivem e trabalham.

**Palavras-chave:** Novas Tecnologias. Demografia do Jornalismo. Pesquisa Qualitativa Comparativa. BRICS.

## DIGITALIZACIÓN Y PERIODISMO EN LOS PAÍSES DEL BRICS

**RESUMEN** - El presente artículo se basa en un estudio más amplio de los periodistas y medios de comunicación en los sistemas de BRICS. Este estudio colectivo de los cinco países no sólo es oportuno, pero también es importante ante la crítica a la naturaleza más occidental de los estudios de periodismo y históricamente único en la era de prominencia de BRICS a principios del siglo 21. Para cubrir este vacío, se puso en marcha un estudio de investigación internacional de cuatro años de los sistemas de medios BRICS. Se ha incluido en este estudio una investigación empírica de dos años de los periodistas, realizada entre diciembre de 2012 y enero de 2015. Centrándose en la dinámica interna de su profesión, incluyendo la transición de los medios de comunicación de fuera de línea para en línea o, como mínimo, la adición de un poco de en línea en los medios periodistas fuera de línea, con el fin de entender los cambios producidos por la entrada de Internet en espacios mediáticos, el estudio presenta en todo su alcance la auto-percepción de los periodistas sobre diversos aspectos de su trabajo.

**Palabras clave:** Nuevas Tecnologías. Demografía del Periodismo. Estudios Comparativos Cualitativos. BRICS

### Introduction

This article presents some results from a larger study of journalists and media systems spurred by the relatively recent establishment of an economic, political and cultural alliance of five countries, i.e., BRICS. The study of the five countries is not only timely, launched as it is on a wave of popularity of the BRICS coalition, but also important in face of the criticism of the rather Western nature of journalism studies (NORDENSTRENG & THUSSU, 2015) and historically unique in an era of emergence of BRICS at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Today, the BRICS media markets are on the rise and, within these markets, the profession of journalism is very popular. For a long time earlier, BRICS had remained on the periphery of international communication, media and journalism research (THUSSU & NORDENSTRENG, 2015). To the best of the authors' knowledge, no books about BRICS journalists per se are available. Even recent global comparative projects, such as Weaver & Willnat's (2012) *The Global Journalist for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (GJ) and the first phase of Hanitzsch et al.'s (2012) *Worlds of Journalism Study* (WJS), did not include journalists from all the BRICS countries. Moreover, both projects (GJ and WJS) focused mostly on traditional news media, and thus could not provide an

understanding of contemporary journalists and global trends in journalism in the context of the omnipresent digitalization of their work and life.

To fill this gap, a four-year international project on BRICS' media systems was launched at the University of Tampere, with funding from the Academy of Finland, involving about fifty researchers from the BRICS countries as well as from Finland and the United States<sup>2</sup>. Included in this was an empirical survey of journalists, undertaken between December 2012 and January 2015. The journalist study used four levels of stratification: 1) personal: class, race, ethnicity, gender, age and professional generation of journalists; 2) organizational: traditional (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) and online news media; 3) extra-organizational: metros (national capitals) and provincial cities; and 4) national: five BRICS countries.

Focusing on the internal dynamics of their profession, including the transition from offline to online or at minimum the addition of some online to offline news media, with a view to understand the changes wrought by the entry of the Internet into media spaces, the study in its full scope presents journalists' self perceptions about various aspects of their work (PASTI, RAMAPRASAD & NDLOVU, 2015). Specifically, the article focuses on journalists' workplace preference (traditional or online news), education, professional age, gender, and well-being, comparing them across the five countries, in an effort to understand the differential connection, if any, between digitalization and journalists' demographics and well-being.

### **Sample<sup>3</sup>**

Sampling guidelines specified convenience sampling for the selection of cities, news organizations and journalists (including snowball sampling at this level) but within certain parameters. Thus, the sample would include both metro and provincial cities. It would have news organizations that are 1) traditional and online 2) national and regional, 3) of different types: newspaper, magazine, radio, television, online, and 4) as applicable, private, mixed and state (government owns over 50% of their direct or indirect assets). It would include both quality

(influential in public life) and popular (large audience) news vehicles. And, it would represent journalists from various ranks, genders and ages (actual and professional age).

Additionally, the sampling frame specified 24 news outlets in each metro and 12 in each provincial city, two journalists from each outlet, and an even split between journalists from traditional and online news. Thus in each country 144 journalists would be interviewed (96 metro; 48 provincial city; 72 traditional, 72 online) for a grand total of 720 journalists from all five BRICS countries. The sampling plan was not always realized due to local circumstances of growth of online news, accessibility to and willingness of news outlets and journalists to participate, and other factors. Further, samples were localized to reflect critical indigenous factors. For example, in selecting news organizations, the Brazilian team defined quality news vehicles as those having the highest impact on the political agenda, whereas the South African team defined them as community media. Or, for example, in some cities of South Africa, China, and India, purely online news outlets were small in number or non-existent and thus news portals and online versions of traditional news media were included. The final sample had 729 journalists because South Africa included 150 journalists, China 146, and India 145; the split by city was 487 metro city and 242 provincial city journalists, and that between offline and online was 484 offline and 245 online journalists. The city sample included twenty BRICS cities, ten metropolitan and ten provincial; in Brazil: Brasília (Federal District), Rio de Janeiro, Juiz de Fora and Vitória; in Russia: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg and Petrozavodsk; in India: New Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Pune; in China: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Wuhan; and in South Africa: Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth.

The implementation of the protocol included face-to-face or phone interviews, conducted in a setting (office or café) preferred by the interviewee but ensuring privacy. The protocol was administered in a language the interviewee was comfortable with (Portuguese, Russian, English, Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Urdu, and Chinese). On average, interviews lasted roughly 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted by national researchers and trained research assistants, mostly students of journalism and mass communication. All interviews were taped and transcribed

and then coded by trained coders in consultation with authors to get counts for those questions that allowed such analyses and also analyzed thematically for patterns. In essence, data analysis employed frequency counts as well as inductive derivation of commonalities. Where required, teams had received IRB permission, and had requested consent from and promised confidentiality to their interviewees.

## FINDINGS

### **Workplace Preference: Traditional or online?**

The factors influencing journalists' workplace preference with regard to type of news media, traditional or online, were varied and definitely characterized conditions of journalism in those countries.

In Brazil, traditional media were considered as more prestigious places of employment than online media both by traditional (58%) and online news media respondents (43%) (PAIVA, GUERRA & CUSTÓDIO. 2015). One of the reasons for this preference is that traditional media demand "greater journalistic responsibility" (PAIVA, GUERRA & CUSTÓDIO, 2015, p. 22). On the other hand, at least this sample considered online media more democratic than traditional media. In terms of social class, half of the online journalists and a third of the traditional news media journalists came from the working class. In terms of education, in online news media, the proportion of those who graduated with a degree in journalism ranged from 50 to 67 percent across the cities, while in traditional media, an overwhelming majority, i.e., 83 percent to 100 percent across the cities, had a journalism degree. Brazilian researchers suggest that, "In professional terms, the internet has represented a new terrain for journalists to act both in established companies and as entrepreneurs to create their own channels for political analysis or their own sources of income" (PAIVA, GUERRA & CUSTÓDIO, 2015, p.10).

In Russia, the political factor, i.e., increased government control of traditional news media, influenced workplace preference. Those young and older journalists eager for professional freedom preferred to seek employment in independent online news

media, which had begun to grow since 2000. In some cases, they left traditional media and launched their own independent news startups. While traditional news media have seen more government regulation in the past fifteen years, the Internet has remained free for alternative opinion. However, as Colta (2015) has indicated, a recent political decision to have the State (i.e., the Federal agency *Roskomnadzor*) monitor, from 2017 onwards, the content of all Internet based media as well as user comments will alter the scenario completely with regard to freedom of opinion in online media.

In India, by contrast, independent online news media are still rare; India has the lowest per capita spread of the Internet (only 19 per cent) among the BRICS countries (FICCI-KPMG, 2015). Here journalists perceived traditional media as more prestigious; these were the news media's brands, recognized and regarded as *the* places of employment. On the other hand, the future of journalism was seen in technology: new media, social media, online journalism, and smart phones.

In China, the traditional media (all Party-state owned) tended to employ those who had an education in journalism and communication and whose parents belonged to a high social class. By contrast, online media representing an alternative to the traditional media in the Chinese media ecology, because of various characteristics such as private or mixed-ownership, or foreign capital funding, or grass-roots nature, were accessible job places for those without a special professional education or those from a lower social class. Some rather noteworthy differences between journalists in traditional as compared to online news media were respectively as follows: permanent job (32 percent to 5 percent), Communist party members (73 percent to 35 percent), and union members (60 percent to 17 percent). Another distinction between them was the level of mobility in journalism; traditional media journalists seldom changed jobs (only 14 percent had two or more jobs earlier) as compared with online journalists (34 percent), suggesting that traditional media were the stable and safe places of work in the current media market (ZHOU, XU, & LI, 2015). In other words, employment by the state (i.e., in traditional media) provided stability, job security, better salaries, a legitimate status as a professional, and larger opportunity for professional and personal advancement; traditional news media were thus considered more prestigious places for employment than the market vulnerable online news media.

In South Africa, online digital-only journalism was developed in the most economically advanced centers, such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, and did not exist in the less developed cities of Port Elizabeth and Durban. As Ndlovu (2015, p. 125) indicated, “The majority of news outlets began investing in online journalism after 2000: one of reasons for the belated entry in a profession, whose main currency is credibility and trust, is a perception of online journalism as not imbued with established journalistic values.” However, the belief that traditional news media have the utmost prestige and that online journalism is less prestigious is changing. Many of the following news sites, *Daily Maverick*, *Health-e News*, *Politicsweb*, *Moneyweb*, *Groundup*, and more recently, *Rand Daily Mail*, that provide strictly digital-only journalism, adhere to the conventional principles of journalism such as using well sourced and researched news copy, fact checking, right of reply, and so on. Some of these platforms produce original copy rather than use syndicated wires/press releases. Of these digital-only journalism enterprises, *Daily Maverick* is gaining much social prestige and respect among the news-consuming elite (NDLOVU, 2015).

### **Holding a Journalism degree/diploma**

Is it likely that with the advent of the practice of journalism by persons other than “professional” journalists, a degree/diploma in journalism is no longer required by some employers or is of reduced importance? Given that this study did not use probability sampling, a firm conclusion is difficult to make. However, in the sample alone, the trends were as follows.

In Brazil, the number of journalists without a diploma in journalism was much higher in online than traditional news media. While in the capital city of Brasilia and the provincial city of Vitoria each, 67 percent of online journalists had a diploma in journalism, in the provincial city of Juiz de Fora, only half of the online journalists had this diploma. That is, the situation as reflected in GJ (Weaver & Willnat, 2012), wherein all Brazilian journalists had a professional education, has changed.

In the Russian sample, unlike Brazil, traditional news media had slightly more journalists without a professional education than

did online news media (56% and 47% respectively). In Russia, the arrival of non-journalists in journalism began in the post-communist era, when the Communist Party was dissolved (1990), the Soviet Union had disintegrated (1991), and the media had become free of the party and the State, with new liberal laws, including laws for the media (1991) and non-governmental organizations (1991). These laws gave the right to any citizen and organization to establish their own media; thus, journalism as a profession and business became available to all. Since then, it is common in Russia to find journalists with a non-journalistic background. One of the reasons for the drop in demand for graduates in the Russian media market was the inadequacy of journalism education; it could not meet the modern requirements of training for work in both journalism and the media business. Respondents in all cities in Russia criticized journalism schools indicating that journalism education has experienced a crisis; it is outdated and divorced from real life practice, i.e., it is too theoretical. A young journalist born in 1985 said, *“Yes, our ... journalism education [is] in general in a crisis, at least it was when I was a student. When we had to learn Web-journalism [and develop the] ability to display texts on the site and work with Internet journalism, we still were taught to prototype on slips of paper with the measure of lines of text, which [was] no longer [how] the work in the editorial office [was done]; so, of course, our journalistic education lags behind the times.”* An education far removed from current practice made it difficult for those with a journalism degree to get a job in the media. One journalist said, *“I know that [journalism education] should not be mentioned [in a job interview]; in applying for a job, if you speak about graduating in journalism, it is goodbye. You should [instead] be a person who has adapted to the currently operational journalism. Among the graduates of the faculty of journalism, only a few get the hang of this immediately.”*

In general, in India, most journalists had a college degree. In terms of a specific education in journalism, a striking difference was not present in this sample between traditional media and online journalists; 69% of the former and 74% of the latter had such a degree. In general, journalism education is becoming increasingly common in India; in particular the television news industry is seeking employees with a journalism degree (Sanjay, 2012). While it is difficult to assess the impact of digitalization on degree trends



given the low presence of independent digital news media in India, for the industry as a whole, the trend in India is towards more specialization rather than less.

In China, the situation was similar to that in Brazil, i.e., fewer in online (49 percent) than in traditional news media (67 percent) had a journalism diploma. The difference can be explained by the tendency of the traditional (party-state owned) media “to recruit staff whose educational background is journalism and communication” (ZHOU, XU, & LI, 2015). On the other hand, the South African case was even more of an exception than Russia; both types of media in South Africa had a majority of journalists educated in journalism (83% and 85% traditional and online respectively).

### **Juniorizing of the profession**

The 2000s brought in a new millennium, but more importantly for this study it also saw the active growth of online media in the world and in the BRICS countries resulting in researchers paying attention to online media (BOCZKOWSKI, 2004; DEUZE, 2003; INTERNET LIVE STATS, 2014; MCQUAIL, 2005; TOMASELLO ET AL., 2010). With the rise of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), social media and blogging, as well as the advent of private economies, journalism has become a very popular profession in the BRICS countries, especially in China and India. This has likely created a journalistic workforce that has large numbers of young journalists; China in particular had the largest number of journalist-respondents under the age of 29 years. This finding is in line with that of the GJ study that collected data in 2008-2010 from probability samples in Brazil, Russia and China (WEAVER & WILLNAT, 2012). In particular, among the thirty-one GJ countries, Chinese journalists were the youngest (mean age = 33 years) followed by journalists in Brazil (40), Russia (41) and the United States (41).

In the BRICS sample, young journalists prevailed in online news media. Young journalists especially appreciated new technologies, which made it easier for them to “find, collect and process information” and to get “feedback from [their] audience.” The technologies also “enrich ... journalistic practices.” A Russian journalist said, “*I came to journalism [in 2006], when*

*new technologies had already been developed. I would not like to work in newspapers, which have strange schedules. I like how now I write the text, I put it on the site. Yes, the quality is lost. [It is a matter of] either speed or quality, but it seems to me it's also a question of experience ... ; the more experienced you become, the better you get at it. There are online media [that] write at the top level; that is cool!"* In another Russian journalist's words: "What has changed in recent years [is that] you have to work with formal and informal information, monitor social networks [and blogs that top in popularity], work with popular bloggers, and work with newsmakers through social networks. Every day the media increasingly presents news 'as reported by blogger;' this is why blogs are an important source now in the production of content."

In some cities, however, i.e., Rio de Janeiro, Juiz de Fora, and Vitoria in Brazil; Wuhan in China, and Petrozavodsk in Russia, the ratio was equal to or in favor of older journalists due to specific local contexts and the use of quota sampling aimed to select the leading media outlets, which usually intermix experienced journalists with talented, young, novice journalists. For example, in Petrozavodsk experienced (and thus older) journalists moved to online or founded startups, unwilling to tolerate censorship in the traditional media.

The popularity of journalism since the advent of ICTs and also due to the initiation of economic liberalization in some countries has also likely created an occupational generation in journalism that entered the profession post-2000. This occupational generation includes professionals who already had careers in other fields but joined journalism post-2000 with the occurrence of the media boom. So while their actual age may be more than 29 years, they are young in their occupational age in journalism. Early studies of media in post-Soviet Russia of the 1990s, during the beginning of liberal reforms in the country, showed that the journalism profession had become accessible to all; individuals of all ages and backgrounds were looking for opportunities and good salaries in the media market, which was booming in contrast to their previous workplaces which were suffering from bankruptcy in the period of 'shock therapy' reforms (Pasti, 2014). The BRICS study found that China had a high post-2000 generation workforce (95 percent in both traditional and online news media), followed in

order by India (80 percent in traditional news media and 93 percent in online news), South Africa (60 percent in traditional and 85 percent in online), Brazil (50 percent of all respondents), and Russia (44 percent in traditional and 68 percent in online).

### **Feminization of journalism**

Journalism initially began as a male occupation everywhere; the word “journalist” itself is a masculine noun in many languages. Journalism is today becoming more and more a female profession, not only in the West but also in the East. This entry of women into the profession in larger numbers has led to some interesting questions: Is the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the start of gender democratization of the profession? Or is feminization a downgrading of the profession: losing its former allure for men and seen less and less as an occupation worthy of men? Or still further, is feminization seen as robbing men of their jobs?

The feminization of journalism is a global phenomenon. Weaver and Willnat (2012, p. 544) indicated that, “the average proportion of women in the countries included in this study has risen to 41% from 33% in 1998.” In the BRICS countries included in the GJ study, the proportion of women in journalism in 2008-2010 was 40% in Brazil, 60% in Russia and 53% in China. The BRICS study reported in this article also noted the feminization trend in all BRICS countries; women accounted for about half or more of the workforce. The respondents in the study had mixed beliefs about whether the increasing presence of female journalists had impacted their work.

In Brazil, the sample respondents indicated a balance between genders: 52% were men and 48% were women; a majority in both online (72%) and traditional media (68%) believed that feminization did not influence their careers. Some observed the dynamics for women in the workplace: “*Women have to work more than men to be valued. There is still much prejudice,*” and “*Brazilians are very sexist. Things are changing, but [the situation has still] to improve*” (PAIVA, GUERRA & CUSTODIO, 2015).

In Russia, a 1999 study of St. Petersburg’s journalists showed that many woman entered the profession, and continued to work in the profession till retirement, whereas male journalists

had either made a career by their '40s and gone on to become top managers or heads of media or left the profession. In eight of the city's leading media (press, radio and television), where interviews were conducted, decision-making positions in newsrooms were almost all held by men (PASTI, 2004). After 13 years, in a new study of St. Petersburg journalists (PASTI, GAVRA, & ANIKINA, 2015), many respondents argued that with the feminization of the profession it was difficult to find a male journalist to take a job in radio, television and the quality press even in such a megacity as St. Petersburg: *"All are worried about women, but here are my feelings; now we have to worry about men. In the profession of journalism somehow the number of males has become fewer and fewer. There is a need to protect men.... [A] few months [ago], I tried to [hire] a male journalist, but all incoming candidates competing for this job were females.... It seems to me [that] soon no male bosses will remain. In my editorial office of five journalists, I am the only one, in fact, who is male. All the rest are women; that is, all other editorial staff are women."*

The feminization trend in Russia may be even higher in the professional generation; for example, in the post-2000 professional generation, the proportion of women was 67% in Russia (PASTI, CHERNYSH, & SVITICH, 2012). One of the factors behind the feminization of the profession in Russia was the economic crisis of 2008-2009 forcing men out of journalism: *"They went into public relations, marketing, because they had to provide for their family. Many [male] political and economic commentators are gone and the number of women has increased. Our media does not have [any] men. We write a lot about statistics, monitor different databases; it is hard work and requires concentration and men [do not find such work] interesting."* Another factor influencing feminization, oddly enough, was technological change (digitalization), which led to an acceleration of the rhythm of work and complexity by intensifying the labor of journalists, a situation that not all men could withstand: *"They run away from [the media outlet] very quickly. They say 'we cannot work at such a tempo.' Among the correspondents, we have more women. On technical matters – there males dominate. In the commercial department, the head is male and all [other employees are female]."*

Only half of the Russian respondents indicated that gender had no effect on their work and career. Thus, the feeling

that women's entry into the profession was affecting male careers, negatively or positively, was certainly present among Russian respondents.

Respondents in the Indian BRICS study indicated that feminization of the profession is occurring in India too, particularly due to the boom in electronic media, and is replacing the gender inequality of the past (PRESS TRUST OF INDIA, n.d.). In Kolkata and Pune, respectively 79% and 88% of journalists felt that there were more females in the field than in previous years. More important, the profession is more cognizant of female talent and work ethic and is creating an enabling environment for women journalists. Male colleagues credited their female colleagues for their zeal and acknowledged that topics that would not have been covered in the past are now receiving coverage. For example, one male journalist suggested, "when a lady is working anywhere she's more human. She can see things from various angles." For the most part, respondents believed that the presence of females had not impacted their work in any significant way.

In China, in both types of media, online and offline, the sample had an almost equal number of male and female (51%) respondents. In online news media, half of the respondents indicated that gender had no effect on their professional career, whereas in traditional media in Beijing and Wuhan the majority felt that gender did play a role in their work and professional advancement (ZHOU, XU, & LI, 2015).

In South Africa, apartheid period newsrooms were dominated by white males (Milton and Fourie 2015). The lifting of apartheid in 1994 and the country's political liberalization both contributed in postcolonial South Africa to a feminization of the newsroom. Recent research provides data on the changing profile of South African newsrooms. Daniels' (2013, p. 22) research on the state of journalism in South Africa, which compared the transformations occurring between 2002 and 2012, indicated that "The 2012-2013 findings from the nine newsrooms surveyed – *CNBC Africa*, *Eyewitness* (EWN), *City Press*, *Mail & Guardian* (M&G), *Sunday Times*, *Beeld*, *SABC*, *The Witness*, and the *Sowetan* – were that the majority of journalists were black – at 61% -- and there was near gender equality with women journalists at 49%. Regarding editors of the nine news organizations, 55% were black and 45% were white. When it came to gender, 55% were male and 45% female." Daniels'(2013:

vi) notes that: “However, with editors countrywide from the main commercial newspapers, belonging to the five print companies, the picture is slightly different: out of 42 editors, 23 are white and 19 are black, or 55% white and 45% black. With gender, it’s 29 male editors and 13 female, or 69% male and 31% female. Drilling into gender dynamics, most of the nine newsrooms had equal, nearly equal and sometimes higher numbers of women than men.” The current BRICS study found that the profession was welcoming of female participation. In the traditional media, the number of female respondents was 44% and in new online media it was 57%. Further, almost 80% of the interviewees, male and female, in online and traditional news media, held the view that gender had no effect on their pay, assignment of stories, and upward mobility opportunities (Ndlovu, 2015).

### **Sources of professional well-being**

Interestingly, journalists in traditional and online news media, in each city and country, and even between countries of BRICS, listed almost the same determinants of their job satisfaction; in order of importance, these were as follows. In Brazil, the journalists in both types of news media were happy 1) when they created high-quality journalistic material, 2) when they received gratitude and feedback from their audience, and 3) from the creative process of their work and their own creative self-realization. Russian journalists listed their reasons thus: 1) the creative process and self-realization, 2) audience gratitude and feedback, and 3) creating high quality journalism. In India, satisfaction came from: 1) audience gratitude and feedback, 2) the creative process and self-realization and 3) journalists’ publication efficiency. Chinese journalists were happy due to 1) their job autonomy, 2) the process of creativity and self-realization, and 3) recognition in a professional environment. One respondent in Beijing indicated, “*The job brings me satisfaction due to the flexibility in time schedules. My working hours are not fixed. I can make my own schedule.*” Journalists in South Africa listed these reasons 1) making change in people’s lives, 2) gratitude and feedback from their audience, and 3) job security and the creative process.

Thus the BRICS journalists perceived themselves as creative persons, pursuing high quality work, wanting to stay connected with their audiences, and desiring appreciation. Some also wanted to change society towards enabling a better and fairer life for all, indicating awareness of their social responsibility as journalists. These journalists were inclined to be agents of change and not simply neutral observers of society.

It is interesting that Chinese journalists did not mention audience appreciation and feedback as one of their three top determinants of job well-being. Instead, they gave importance to “recognition in a professional environment.” Perhaps it was the influence of their age: 70% of them were under the age of 29 and 95% of them entered journalism after 2000. In the initial period of professional socialization, the recognition of colleagues is likely to be one of the factors important to the well-being of a young journalist. The Chinese respondents’ articulation of normative roles may present a clue to the reason for their thirst for recognition. These journalists saw themselves as 1) information disseminators, 2) public opinion guiders or supervisors, and 3) links between the government and the public. That is, in the social and political hierarchy, they saw themselves as exclusive owners of important information and in alliance with the government for the progress of their country. Half of the respondents worked in traditional media, which are state-owned, and many were members of the Communist Party. In a collectivistic culture like China’s, obedience to hierarchical superiors (in family and society; in the newsroom, profession, and career) is a value because it helps to maintain yet another value, harmony and order. This may be the reason it was more important for Chinese journalists to receive recognition in the professional environment than recognition from their audience.

Quite different from Chinese journalists, journalists in South Africa, rated the first and second reasons for job satisfaction, i.e., ‘to make changes in people’s lives’ and ‘thanks and feedback from the audience’ almost equally. They also differed from Chinese journalists in their view of their professional roles, seeing themselves as truth-tellers, the Fourth Estate, and watchdog of the government (NDLOVU, 2015).

On the opposite end, factors that caused journalists distress were very similar in all countries: low salaries, irregular working hours and routines, job insecurity in the labour market,

downsizing of the staff, reduced funds for work related travel, lack of freedom, and pressure from media owners. In their answers about the conditions needed for journalism to perform its functions, the BRICS journalists reiterated the need for freedom; they wanted more democracy and freedom of speech and more economically independent media.

### **Digitalization and Conditions of Journalism Practice in BRICS**

Given the non-probability nature of the sample and the findings of differences among the BRICS countries with regard to the impact of digitalization and of the penetration of independent digital news media into the journalistic sphere, the most that can be said is that the BRICS digital journalistic landscape and its impact on work preference, degree requirements, feminization, juniorization and well being is kaleidoscopic.

Preferences for workplace vary from those in India wanting to work in traditional news media to those in Russia leaving traditional media and moving to digital news for the promise of greater freedom. The drop in demand for certified/degreed journalists in some BRICS countries' news media likely arose from the need for new workers due to the fast growth of media markets, but also from the advent of new technologies in journalistic work, increasingly requiring training in new professions/skills: IT specialists, computer geeks, programmers, marketers, and such. And while juniorization is likely increasing across BRICS countries, its reasons are varied from simply an exponential growth in news media outlets in India that requires a larger and larger workforce to the growth of digital media that require new skills and varied degrees to work effectively in the virtual space of news.

There is little uncertainty that feminization is increasing in all BRICS countries' journalism workplaces but this appears to be more a global trend than related to digital news media's growth. In fact, it appears to predate the digitalization of the profession. "It may be a reflection of the growing number of females entering the workforce in general but is particularly noteworthy in journalism given its unusual working hours, in some cases the unusual degree of danger associated with journalism, and in some countries the rather protective or restrictive nature of



the rearing of the girl child. In the post-communist countries of Russia and China, feminization is connected with the political liberalization of journalism in the context of the transition from 'hard power' to 'soft power' and with the shift in emphasis from the propagandist function (entrusted mostly to males to defend communist values) to a plurality of functions to satisfy varied consumer interests including those of women consumers that female journalists may be better able to present" (PASTI, RAMAPRASAD & NDLOVU 2015, 222).

Feminization of journalism should be investigated further as part of the "the changing character of labor markets around the world," which have "been leading to a rise in female labor force participation and a relative if not absolute fall in men's employment, as well as a 'feminization' of many jobs traditionally held by men" (STANDING 1999, 583). "Since the 1970s the global economy has been in an era of market regulation, and growing labor market flexibility, in which new technologies, new labor control systems and reformed forms of work organization have transformed patterns of labor force participation throughout the world. In the process, the turn of the century will mark the end of the century of the laboring man in a literal and real sense, in that women will account for almost as many of the 'jobs' as men" (STANDING, 1999, p. 583).

And finally, in the journalists' domain in BRICS, well being remains rooted in the freedom to exercise creativity, in the pat on the back from audiences, and in using the profession to advance social justice.

Despite these differing trends in the connection between digitalization (Table 1) and BRICS journalists' demographics and well being, in fact in the very penetration of the digital news media in these countries, this exercise in understanding the place of virtual media in aspects of journalists' work life is not without value. It provides a benchmark for BRICS countries, a place for future researchers to compare changes, and the need to more directly collect journalists' narratives about their digital spaces particularly in terms of how their work/life engagement with this medium interact and how this interaction in turn impacts their personal and professional life.

## NOTES

- 1 Key documentation on BRICS is available on <http://www.nkibrics.ru/pages/brics-figures-and-facts> on the page of the Russian national committee for BRICS research.
- 2 <http://uta.fi/cmt/tutkimus/BRICS.html>
- 3 Most of the description of the sample is borrowed verbatim from the 'Editorial note' written by Pasti and Ramaprasad (2015) for the special issue of *African Journalism Studies*, 2015, 36:3 that presented the first report of the empirical findings of the BRICS journalists' survey, 2012-2015.

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## ANNEXES

**Table 1-** Ten top countries by Internet Usage (July 1, 2014)

Rank	Country	Internet Users	1 Year Growth %	1 Year User Growth	Total Country Population	1 Yr Population Change (%)	Penetration (% of Pop. with Internet)	Country's share of World Population	Country's share of World Internet Users
1	China	641,601,070	4%	24,021,070	1,393,783,836	0.59%	46.03%	19.24%	21.97%
2	United States	279,834,232	7%	17,754,869	322,583,006	0.79%	86.75%	4.45%	9.58%
3	India	243,198,922	14%	29,859,598	1,267,401,849	1.22%	19.19%	17.50%	8.33%
4	Japan	109,252,912	8%	7,668,535	126,999,808	-0.11%	86.03%	1.75%	3.74%
5	Brazil	107,822,831	7%	6,884,333	202,033,670	0.83%	53.37%	2.79%	3.69%
6	Russia	84,437,793	10%	7,494,536	142,467,651	-0.26%	59.27%	1.97%	2.89%
7	Germany	71,727,551	2%	1,525,829	82,652,256	-0.09%	86.78%	1.14%	2.46%
8	Nigeria	67,101,452	16%	9,365,590	178,516,904	2.82%	37.59%	2.46%	2.30%
9	United Kingdom	57,075,826	3%	1,574,653	63,489,234	0.56%	89.90%	0.88%	1.95%
10	France	55,429,382	3%	1,521,369	64,641,279	0.54%	85.75%	0.89%	1.90%

Source: Internet Live Stats ([www.InternetLiveStats.com](http://www.InternetLiveStats.com))

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