

Reasons and Conditions That Stimulate Journalists' "Exodus" to Other Fields

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Abstract

As long as the manufacturing industry is concerned, the undertaken studies emphasize, inter alia, particularly the motivation aspect, considering it as an essential factor in work quality increase and consequently, in the provided products quality and quantity as well. This means not only the salary, but also the working conditions, its evaluation, cooperation collegial atmosphere and ongoing solutions etc. Taking this overview into consideration, through this study, we aim at analysing the factors that motivate or demotivate the journalists to continue their professional career in the media. The research is based on primary data collected by surveying 321 journalists and 302 students of journalism, as well as 14 interviews carried out with former journalists who have moved to other professions. The study raises the question "Does the Albanian media guarantee motivating conditions for the journalists in order to continue their career within this profession?", analysing it based on three main factors deemed as the most important ones by the interviewed journalists: job security, level of salary and recognition. According to a comprehensive analysis of multidimensional data, the study concludes that media in Albania fails to adequately consider the three above factors. Therefore, they turn into motivating factor towards other professions for the journalists. Another key concern is related to the fact that most of the journalists and students of Journalism see themselves outside the media in a near future, thus risking the media product to be generated by the experienced professionals in this field.

Keywords: journalists' motivation, Albanian media, journalists' exodus. Motivation theories, salary, job security, recognition.

Introduction

Almost all the countries which came out from the communist regimes by the end of previous century have had similar issues regarding the media industry functioning, as one of the main pillars to preserve and develop democracy. Even though there has been an improvement in the level of freedom and pluralism in media, these countries have continued to be a part of the concerns raised by different national and international organizations, which monitor freedom of speech through various indicators. The south-eastern European countries, such as Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Serbia, Turkey, etc., continue to have issues regarding freedom of speech. Therefore, media has not managed to become a powerful voice and to get the deserved position within the society. Consequently, it has an impact on the journalists' work and their professional engagement.

All these pressures, which originate from

internal actors, and which are mainly related to the owners' interests, as well as the external actors, such as politics, business or other actors with different objectives, have contributed to some insecurity among the journalists, encouraging them to use the media as a springboard to move towards other areas. This situation has caused an exodus among the journalists, which is something that harms significantly not only the media, but also public information and level of democracy in the country.

The following study analyses the push and pull motivating factors with an impact on the journalists' decision-making to stay or not in the media, foreseeing the challenges against this industry in a near future.

Methodology

The study is mainly based on the qualitative and quantitative primary data collected specifically on this topic. The quantitative data

were collected during the two first weeks of February 2021, through two questionnaires, one with 321 journalists and the other one with 302 students of journalism from four different Albanian universities, aiming at collecting information on the current situation of the Albanian journalists and media in general, as well as on the challenges of media in the future.

A special attention was paid to the testimonies of 14 journalists who have left media to move to different fields, in the country and abroad, as an attempt to highlight the main reasons in their decision to take another direction in their professional career far from journalism. These former journalists are now working in different sectors, such as public relations, communication offices in state institutions, domestic and international organizations, etc.

The data analysis was carried out as a reflection towards some of the motivation theories with the main focus on “*The motivation-hygiene theory*”, proposed by Frederick Herzberg. The analysis includes data mainly about three core factors which motivate the decision to stay in the professions: job security, level of salary and recognition, which are considered as the most important factors by the interviewed and surveyed journalists during the study.

Hypothesis

Albanian media, at the moment, does not guarantee the work atmosphere and conditions which motivate the journalists to dedicate themselves to this profession in the near future.

Research questions

- Which are the main factors that impact on the journalists' decision-making to continue or not the profession of journalism?
- How is the situation between the active journalists and the students of journalism, and their professional life in the future?

Journalists' exodus: What (de)motivates the journalists to stay or not in the media?

The period which followed the sudden establishment of the Albanian media institutions, particularly at the beginning of the 2000s, was accompanied with the increase of the number of journalists that would graduate in the departments of journalism, in the public and private universities, as well as with leaving

journalism and moving towards other sectors. Actually, during a period of political and social transition, the establishment of the department of journalism in the public system, and then in the private one as well, without conducting a market study, entailed an increase of the “work force” beyond the needs and the context of the developments related to this profession. On the other hand, due to the conditions that the Albanian media provide for its employees, the trend to abandon it results in the situation where “more than 60% of the journalists are younger than 30 years of age, meanwhile over 80% of the journalists are under the age of 35”. (Fuga, Marku, & Goci, Tregu i punës në media, 2019, p. 14)

The reasons of the exodus may be various, such as declining of advertising revenues, reduction of newspaper circulation, decreasing of budgets by the media and the advertising industry, the priorities of media owners to invest much more in technological infrastructure and neglect of the need for professional journalists, low salaries of journalists, media partnerships with actors which weigh on the public interest, etc. The media owners seem to have forgotten the irreplaceable analytical and critical role of the journalist, which according to Professor Artan Fuga cannot be simplified to the role of a cameraman. “The journalist's role firstly is the critical analysis of information that the camera brings on the screen. He/she selects, relativizes, analyses without becoming simply an actor who provides the gross data.” (Fuga, 2017, p. 855) This underrated role of the journalists through different forms has caused this broad exodus towards other professions. We can list several reasons why someone may change their job. “However, scholars regard dissatisfaction with the previous profession as one of the main drivers for switching from one profession to another. Accordingly, job dissatisfaction may be the main reason why journalists switch fields.” (Viererbl & Koch, 2019, p. 2)

In 1959, the prominent American scholar of psychology, Frederick Herzberg proposed the “Two-Factor Theory”, which was otherwise called “The Motivation-Hygiene Theory”. This theory analyses the way how two different groups of factors explain the employees' satisfaction and dissatisfaction in a certain position, which impact on their motivation and performance.

Herzberg divides the motivation factors in two main groups: motivators and hygiene. The

first group includes those factors which motivate the individual directly to work more. They are recognition, achievement, possibility of growth, advancement, work itself, responsibility. On the other hand, hygiene factors are those that when not present, can cause demotivation of employees. They are supervision-technical, company policy and administration, interpersonal relations, working conditions, salary, job security, and status. (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959, pp. 44-49)

Herzberg raises the question that “What do people want from their jobs?” Referring to the data of his study, Herzberg argues that most of the people involved in the research admitted that they felt happy with their work, justifying this with factors related to the tasks they did, success stories and possibilities for professional growth. Meanwhile, the opposite happens with the responses collected about the situations of dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg, the dissatisfactions are not related mainly to the work itself, but with the conditions in the premises where the activity is carried out. “These events suggest to the individual that the context in which he performs his work is unfair or disorganized and as such represents to him an unhealthy psychological work environment.” (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959, p. 113)

The German scholars Benno Viererbl and Thomas Koch conducted an analysis based on the principles on Herzberg’s theory, connecting it with the people employed in the media and the grounds that drive them to move to other sectors of communication industry, or even beyond it. According to them, the analysis on the grounds that drive the journalists to go towards the other fields should be deemed according two different approaches.

“Journalists might change professions because they are so poorly paid that they cannot maintain their standard of living; in this situation, the journalist is virtually pushed out of his or her job. However, it might also be the case that the journalist has sufficient income but decides to change professions because a PR agency offers him or her a much higher salary – virtually pulling him or her out of his or her old job (e.g. Shultz et al., 1998). Therefore, we differentiate between push and pull factors” (Viererbl & Koch, 2019, p. 4).

They define push factors as negatively experienced influences arising from a journalist’s job. “This includes both hygiene factors such as salary or job security, and motivators such as the feeling of appreciation or responsibility. Pull factors refer to external, positive influences originating in the attractiveness of the other occupation – the PR sector or a concrete PR job. These pull factors draw people into working in PR” (Viererbl & Koch, 2019, p. 4).

Viererbl and Koch claim that the perception of the push and pull factors is subjective and depends on the context of the situation. “It is unclear whether journalists are mainly being pushed out of their jobs (e.g. because of poor working conditions or layoffs) or whether the attractiveness of the PR profession (e.g. higher salaries, social benefits, job security, or generally better working conditions) is the driving force behind the job shifts, pulling journalists toward PR” (Viererbl & Koch, 2019, p. 4).

Due to the nature of their job, the journalists are usually perceived as good professionals, capable of doing different tasks, particularly when they are related the communication issues. This helps them undertake different professional roles. However, basically, the professional journalists, dedicated to information collection, processing and delivery, would remain more loyal to their categorization as professionals engaged within the media.

Findings

Based on the principles determined by Herzberg’s theory, a lot of work is necessary to be done by the Albanian media to ensure the professional human resources who will work in it for a long time, even though the data show that the latter would generally prefer to assume the profession of the journalist up to the age of retirement.

The Albanian media industry does not seem to promise sufficient security for the journalists, in order to stay in this profession. In the framework of this study, 14 former journalists, who are currently working outside the media, were interviewed. After categorising the collected responses, we can notice that the lack of job security, salary level and recognition are the main reasons that have made them leave media to move towards other fields. (Figure 1)

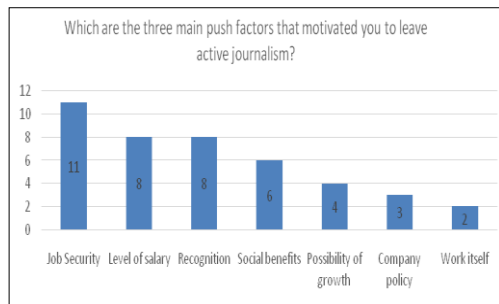


Figure 1. Main push factors that motivate journalists to leave active journalism

Source: R. Çipuri, Interviews conducted with 14 journalists who have left the media to move to other fields, May 2021

Job security is ranked as the most serious concern of the journalists who have abandoned the profession. However, it is also the main concern of the journalists who are currently working in the media, as well as the students of journalism who are expected to get engaged professionally in the near future. “Job security occurs along the two dimensions of feelings namely, threat to total job and threat to job features. The first is the feeling of threats to one’s total job, i.e. threats to a total job. [...] The second way in which job insecurity is manifested is in feelings of threats to job features, i.e. when some aspects of one’s job (features), are threatened.” (Kwabiah, Hodibert, & Robert, 2016, p.20)

According to Herzberg, job security “includes such considerations as tenure and company stability or instability, which reflected in some objective way on a person’s job security.” (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959, p. 49) The data indicate a certain insecurity among the journalists, which originate from the 30-year past of the Albanian media industry, where the dismissals, the employments without a work contract, the lack of legal protection, the lack of professional status, low

salaries and the delays in delivering the salaries, etc., have been its main characteristic features. “The dismissals in the newsroom are common, and the journalists’ right or guilt presumption is not considered. Only after 2006 in the Court of Tirana began litigation for arbitrary cases of dismissal of journalists by media administrators” (Çipuri, 2016, p. 86).

According to a detailed report on the Albanian media landscape in 2019, the Union of Albanian Journalists (UAJ) reported that over the past three decades there have been hundreds of journalists whose social security and health insurance has not been paid to the Institute of Social Security (ISS), even though the journalists have been informed that their social security have been paid by the companies. “Up to 2007, media entities reported only one third of the general number of their employees in the lists of social insurance.” (UAJ, 2019) Out of 840 surveyed journalists by the UAJ, 506, or about 60%, confirm the above phenomenon of “theft”, as they had been told that the money kept out of their salary had been used to pay their social and health insurance. This increased a lack of trust among the journalists towards their employers. This fact is also an indicator of the lack of the conditions for social benefits, including the minimum ones provided for in the law, let alone social benefits related to life insurance, assets insurance, health insurance, etc. When the journalists were asked about this aspect, they admitted that they would not abandon this profession if they felt secure for the job position. Regarding the affirmation “*If I felt secure about my job, I would never leave journalism*”, more than 74% of the surveyed journalists, gave the evaluation 4 and 5 points, against 9% of them who evaluate the case with 1 or 2 points, expressing disagreement. (Table 1)

Table 1. Journalists’ opinion about job security and the desire to continue the job in the media

If I felt secure about my job, I would never leave journalism (1 - Disagree completely / 5- Agree completely)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	16	5.0	5.0	5.0
	2	13	4.0	4.0	9.0
	3	54	16.8	16.8	25.9
	4	63	19.6	19.6	45.5
	5	175	54.5	54.5	100.0

	Total	321	100.0	100.0	
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Source: R. Çipuri, Survey with 321 journalists, 2021, February 2021

Actually, the students of journalism, who after some years will be part of this industry, share the same concern. When they were asked “*What makes you feel more insecure in your professional future in the media?*”, out of 302 surveyed students, 88 or 29% ranked “Insecurity in the work place” as their most serious concern, accompanied with “The positioning of the media outside its mission” (25%), “Pressures against the journalists” (23.5%) and the “Low Salaries” (over 22%).

Salary, highlighted as an indisputable need by Herzberg’s two-factor theory, but also by several other motivation theories, is one of the most crucial elements which impact the professional future of the Albanian journalists. Even after three post-communist decades, the salary has not become a typical discussion point among the actors involved in this business, not only regarding its level for different positions (that is to say, from the quantity aspect), but also regarding other concerning phenomena, such as the delays in giving the salary and informality that accompanies the way how it is given to the journalists. “One of the most concerning issues raised by the journalists and the media organizations, is related to the fact that due to the informality that has characterized a considerable part of the industry, today we are in the phase when there are very few individuals in this profession who retire as journalists.” (Çipuri, Media përballë pasqyrës, 2021, p.151) Another concerning phenomenon is the way how the Albanian media employees have been paid over the years. According to UAJ, over 35% of the journalists who agreed to provide personal data about their insurance and contributions for the period 2012-2019, benefit their social

contributions from a second job, even though they result to have been reporters, editors, or journalists for different media for several years.

The main appointments for the insured journalists are: reporter of administration, media journalist, university professor, head of sector in social administration/fields, press relations officer, other specialists in the field of art and culture, news editor, archivist, office coordinator, advisor, journalist, audio-visual operator, employee responsible for providing information, language and literature teacher, executive director (of NGOs), representative of commercials, senior specialist, principal in schools, director of museums, webmaster, speaker in a TV station, management analyst. Meanwhile, despite the above concerns, the salary of the Albanian media journalists has always been considered to be at average and under the average levels compared to similar professions in social fields. The financial payment provided by such a profession is considered to be insufficient to provide for the living of an average family, with one or two children, who possess their own house. The situation becomes even more difficult when the journalists live in rented houses. Consequently, a considerable number of journalists are obliged to get a second, part-time or full-time job, to make their living, in a society where the political, economic and social transition has lasted much longer than the one of the countries with a similar history. According to different data, [(ZipRecruiter, 2021) (JR, 2019) (Payscale, 2021) (Salaryexpert, 2021)], the Albanian journalists’ average salary is lower compared to the one of the other countries in the region, and it is very far from the salaries of the journalists in the developed countries. (Table 2)

Table 2. Level of journalists’ average payment in different countries

Countries	USA (USD/Year)	United Kingdom (Pound)	Italy (Euro)	Greece (Euro)	North Macedonia (Euro)	Kosovo (Euro)	Albania (Euro)
Level of salary Euro/Year	36.441	32.883	37.500	27.548	10.400	6.340	5.550

“As an affector of job attitudes, salary has more potency as a job dissatisfier than as a job satisfier.” (Herzberg, Mausner, &

Snyderman, 1959, p. 82) Out of the 14 journalists who have left media, 8 of them deem the salary as well as recognition as the second most important element for their decision-making. On the other

hand, according to the survey conducted with 321 journalists of different media, it results that in 2021, the gross salary benefited by 62% of the Albanian journalists are mainly at the level of 251-650 Euro/month/. Out of 321 surveyed journalists, about 14% state that they are paid 125-250 Euro/month. These are mainly journalists who work in news portals or students of journalism who are engaged in other media bodies. The most satisfactory salaries are for about 13%, who are paid about 651-800 Euro/month, for about 9% who are paid 801-1200 Euro/month, and for only 2% or 7 out of 321 journalists, who say that they have a minimum salary between 1201-1600

Euro/month. When they were asked about the affirmation “*I would like to continue with journalism as a profession, but it does not provide sufficient incomes to make a living*”, 169 out of 321, or amount 53% of the surveyed journalists said that they “agreed” or “agreed completely” with such a thing. And if the evaluation with 3 points - out of 5 in total - is added to this figure, then, the percentage is even more convincing reaching at over 80%. Only 20% of the journalists are against this affirmation, giving only 1 or 2 points. (Table 3)

Table 3. Desire for the profession and the proportion with the salary

I would like to continue with journalism as a profession, but it does not provide sufficient incomes to make a living. (1 - Disagree completely / 5 - Agree completely)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	14	4.4	4.4	4.4
	2	50	15.6	15.6	19.9
	3	88	27.4	27.4	47.4
	4	66	20.6	20.6	67.9
	5	103	32.1	32.1	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	

Source: R. Çipuri, Survey with 321 journalists, 2021, February 2021

think of their future in this profession. Meanwhile, the lower the salary, the higher the journalists' tendency to move towards other professions.

The data in table 5 indicate a connection between the high salary and the desire to stay in the media. Only 38% of the surveyed journalists

Table 4. Proportion between the journalists' salary and their future in the media (Crosstabulation)

How much are you paid in a monthly basis (gross salary)?* Where do you see your professional future? Crosstabulation								
		Where do you see your professional future?						
		Media	Abroad	Marketi ng	Business	PR	Politics	Other
How much are you paid at a monthly basis (gross salary)?	125-250	13	12	0	5	24	0	0
	251-400	29	25	2	15	21	1	1
	401-650	38	22	0	16	7	2	0
	651-800	17	5	0	10	8	1	3
	801-1200	21	3	0	1	6	2	1
	1201-1600	5	0	0	1	3	1	0
Total		123	67	2	123	48	7	5

Source: R. Çipuri, Survey with 321 journalists, 2021, February 2021

their future in other fields. The desire to stay in the media increases about 45% for the salaries 401-650 Euro/month, 38% for the salaries 651-800 Euro /month, and 59% for the ones who benefit 801-1600 Euro/month.

Only 28% of the surveyed journalists (42 out of 148) who get 125-400 Euro/month think that they will have a career in journalism. On the other hand, 78% of the surveyed journalists see

In addition, the fact that the salaries level is one of the motivating elements for the continuation of the profession by the journalists is

noticed even in their responses, when they were asked regarding the affirmation “*If I had a satisfactory salary, I would never leave the profession in journalism*”.

Table 5. Impact of salary level compared to the work in the media

If I had a satisfactory salary, I would never leave the profession in journalism. (1 - Completely disagree / 5 - Completely agree)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	12	3.7	3.7	3.7
	2	12	3.7	3.7	7.5
	3	39	12.1	12.1	19.6
	4	65	20.2	20.2	39.9
	5	193	60.1	60.1	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	

Source: R. Çipuri, Survey with 321 journalists, 2021, February 2021

More than 80% of the journalists would not leave journalism if they had satisfactory salaries. “Typically, the formal vehicle for recognition is a merit rating of some kind. On this the individual depends for salary increases, promotions, and quality of assignments.” (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959, p.135) “All people in our society (with a few pathological exceptions) have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of

others.”(Maslow, 1943, p. 380) “The more emotionally stable, extraverted, agreeable or conscientious people are, the more they tend to like their jobs (irrespective of their salaries).” (Chamorro P, 2013)

According to the journalists who have left the media, lack of **recognition**, work and their professional contribution shall be evaluated at the same importance as the salary level, regarding the reason to stay or not in the media. (Table 1) We come across this issue even in the surveyed journalists’ responses, where the majority of them recognize it as a significant concern within the media.

Table 6. Journalists’ opinion about their appreciation at the work place

I feel appreciated for the work I do in the media where I work (1 - Completely disagree / 5- Fully agree)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	103	32.1	32.1	32.1
	2	60	18.7	18.7	50.8
	3	98	30.5	30.5	81.3
	4	44	13.7	13.7	95.0
	5	16	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	

Source: R. Çipuri, Survey with 321 journalists, 2021, February 2021

About 51% (163 out of 321) of the journalists do not feel appreciated in their work place, evaluating it with 1 or 2 points, meanwhile, about 19% (60 out of 321) think

differently and they agree with 4 and 5 points.

Based on the above overview about media functionality in Albania, it is important to mention the fact that a considerable part of the journalists have lost the trust in this industry, and they think that the latter is just a mechanism in the function of media owners.

Table 7. Journalists' opinion: These days, media functions mainly in the function of its owners' interests

These days, media functions mainly in the function of its owners' interests (1 - Completely disagree / 5 - Completely agree)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	18	5.6	5.6	5.6
	2	20	6.2	6.2	11.8
	3	69	21.5	21.5	33.3
	4	74	23.1	23.1	56.4
	5	140	43.6	43.6	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	

Source: R.Çipuri, Survey with 321 journalists, 2021, February 2021

214 out of 321 journalists (or about 67%) think that media this day is mainly in the function of its owners' interests; meanwhile 12% think the opposite. (Table 7)

About 53% of the surveyed journalists think that apart from the owners' interests, media also functions according to the external actors' interests (politics, businesses, etc.). A dependence bond is established between them, and eventually there is a win-win result for all the parties.

Even though they might not have been introduced to the situation directly, the students of journalism share the same opinion. With regard to the same issue, 195 out of 302, or 64.5% of them think that media functions according to its owners' interest, meanwhile 49 other students, about 16%, think differently.

Impact of (de)motivating factors on the future

If the opportunity was given to you today, which of the following field would you choose instead of journalism?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business	110	34.3	34.3	34.3
	Marketing	50	15.6	15.6	49.8
	Public relations	53	16.5	16.5	66.4
	Politics	34	10.6	10.6	76.9
	I do not leave journalism	67	20.9	20.9	97.8
	Other	7	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	

Source: R. Çipuri, Survey with 321 journalists, 2021, February 2021

of media

In order to prevent the journalists' exodus towards similar professions, media should not do anything else, but treat the journalists and all the supporting employees and staff with dignity, through their work contracts, which should be enforced without being only formal ones, good salaries according to the market; as well as the continuous training for the professional growth of everyone who works in this field.

The data indicate that about 21% of the journalists do not want to leave journalism, even if they had the opportunity for another job. (Table 8) Over 34% accept that they would leave to be engaged in a business, 16.5% would move to public relations, or marketing field, which is preferred by about 16% of the surveyed people. After business, public relations seem to be the most desirable field for the journalists.

Table 2. If the opportunity was given to you today, which of the following fields would you choose instead of journalism?

The situation does not seem to be different even among the students of journalism, who - without starting the job yet - consider media as a

springboard to go towards public relations. When they were asked about their opinion regarding the affirmation “*Firstly, I would like to focus on my career as a journalist and then, I will move to the public relations field*”, over 48% strongly accepted it with 4 and 5 points. Only 25% of the surveyed students refuse this approach and gave 1 or 2 points out of 5 in total.

The main reasons why the journalists move to PR are not related only with the facilities of the sector, but also with the motivation that originates from the better work conditions, such as the salary, work security, sector consolidation, the opportunities to be promoted etc.

The salary that is generally given to public relations employees in the private entrepreneurship is usually more competitive than the one provided by the industry of media. “According to the contacts with some specialists and public relations office directors, it results that the salaries in this field, in the serious companies, start averagely from 650 Euro/month for a specialist, more than 800 Euro/month for section directors, up to 1600-2000 Euro/month for the positions of directors/managers, according to the experience of the latter.” (Çipuri, 2021, p. 191) This level changes when it is the case of the public administration, of the private companies, which do not have a very broad activity, and the salaries are low.

Due to the organisation of different industries that engage PR teams, unlike what happens normally in the media, the formalization of contractual relations and the way of delivering the salaries or paying social insurance is an issue that has been solved almost completely.

Even though there is a perception about the conflicts between the previous roles and the ones that make the journalists leave media towards public relations, it results that this change is not very difficult and insurmountable. On the contrary, over the years, it makes them feel more professional in the new job they do. 8 out of 14 former journalists (who have abandoned their profession and work in the public relations sector) admit that they feel satisfied with the environment and the conditions provided in the new job.

In almost all the interviews conducted with former journalists engaged in the field of public relations or elsewhere, a kind of nostalgia was noticed about the work they have done in the media. However, they consider the return in the media almost impossible, except for a case when

the conditions of media industry may change and offer the guarantees that were missing at the moment when they decided to leave.

The characterizing features of Albanian media have impacted on the level of pessimism not only among the journalists who assume the function, but even among the students of journalism, most of whom do not consider this profession as the profession of their future.

Table 10. Firstly, I want to dedicate myself to my career as a journalist and then I will move to other fields (Journalism students' opinion)

Firstly, I want to dedicate myself to my career as a journalist and then I will move to other fields (1 - Completely disagree / 5 - Completely agree)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	61	20.2	20.5	20.5
	2	25	8.3	8.4	29.0
	3	58	19.2	19.5	48.5
	4	66	21.9	22.2	70.7
	5	87	28.8	29.3	100.0
	Total	297	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	1.7		
Total		302	100.0		

Source: Survey with 302 students of journalism from 4 different Albanian universities, 2021, Dr. R. Çipuri

When they were asked regarding the affirmation “*Firstly I want to dedicate myself to my career as a journalist and then, I will move to other fields*”, more than 50% agreed, meanwhile 28.5% had another opinion. About 19% of the surveyed students are neutral, and they give 3 points for this affirmation. (Table 9) Similarly to the active journalists' approach, (Table 5), as it can be noticed with the data of table 11, there is a big desire of the students to continue their

career beyond journalism in the future. Out of 302 (about 34%) students of journalism only 101, who study in four different universities in Albania, think that they will be working in the media after the age of 40. According to the data, about 22% of the students of journalism think to get engaged in business, and about 18% find themselves in the public relations sector or in the communication offices in the private and public sectors.

Table 3. Where do you see yourselves after the age of 40?
(Journalism students' opinion)

Where do you see yourself after the age of 40?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Business	66	21.9	21.9	22.9
	Abroad	80	26.5	26.5	48.3
	PR at the private sector	23	7.6	7.6	56.0
	In the media	101	33.4	33.4	89.4
	In communication offices in public institutions	32	10.6	10.6	100.0
	Total	302	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey with 302 students of journalism from 4 different Albanian universities, 2021, Dr. R.Çipuri

The fact that 26.5% think that they will have left Albania should be considered as a moment of reflection for media industry and Albanian politics, in order to create the conditions in our country for these youngsters, who after some years will serve as professionals

in different sectors of the industry.

Analysis and conclusions

According to the analysis and the data treated during this study, we may say that the analysis of the “exodus” in journalism from the newsrooms towards other engagements is a process which needs to be studied in several directions. These may be categorized in *four main plans*:

- The determination of the role of media, journalism and journalists in society;
- The technological developments, which impact on the work of media and of the journalist;
 - Each employees' age and desire for professional promotion;
 - Direct connection with the economic stages the country is going through.

First plan: Specification of the role of media, journalism and journalists in the Albanian society.

Firstly, throughout the last 30-year period, media in Albania has never been considered as a typical profession, which "embraces" the professionals from the moment they are still in school and "frees" them when they retire. It has been considered and still continues to be considered as an extension of politics, mainly depending on media owners' connections and interests'.

Secondly, the journalists in Albania seem to focus more on their passion, than on the reality offered by this field. They appear to be idealistic in their youth, maybe from the moment they are still students. However, it takes them a decade or less in active journalism to understand that the above-mentioned concerns do not permit their long-term development, professional dignity, well-being and continuity.

Given this situation, media owners themselves or their supporters in the backstage seem not to pay attention to a well-educated and well-informed journalist, who (above all) has professional dignity, impartiality and constructive engagement as they serve to the public. Nowadays, we notice how the professional journalists, sooner or later, are obliged to leave from their newsrooms, to move to other newsrooms, or towards other jobs and professions in the field of communication, marketing, business and of course, politics.

Second plan: Technological developments, which of course, impact the work of media and of the journalist

Of course, the interested owners and actors (politics, business, etc.) have a plan for media and journalism. However, on the other hand, a serious threat for Albanian media and journalists' work nowadays comes directly from technology. This technology has weakened the role of the journalist, because the politician or the executive chief of the corporation thinks that they can communicate directly with the public through their profiles in social media.

Technology is risking the classical

formats of public communications, such as press conferences, which used to be a very important place where the journalists would "cross-examine", politicians, chief of businesses, etc., they would ask questions, which would not necessary be pleasant for the latter. However, they had the obligation to answer.

Third plan: Age and desire for professional promotion of each employee, no matter if they are a journalist, economist, lawyer, engineer etc.

Journalism has become a profession defined by the age. So, it is a profession of youngsters, who have time and energy to dedicate to media. It is noticed that nowadays the age of the active journalists in the newsroom has declined considerably. There are a few old journalists and editors, who are - very often - in managing positions calcified over the years.

Most of media institutions have employed journalists who often come from the first year of bachelor studies. Given the conditions, there is a question: how may a youngster exercise impartial and professional journalism, as long as they do not know the basis and have not completed the Bachelor studies? Furthermore, how can someone become an important person in media (an editor or a chief), as long as they have not finished their master studies in that specific field?

As technology challenges us when it comes to time, we notice how the youngsters are more preferable in newsrooms, for a simple reason as they do not provide quantity. Thus, it is important to highlight that nowadays, when it comes to information, we do not suffer for quantity, but for quality.

The young journalists enter with passion in the newsroom. They dedicate too much time to work, beyond the inexistent contracts or the inconsiderable benefits they get. They want to feel complete with their work. On the other hand, over the time, this declines until a moment arrives when this passion fades away and does not stimulate the journalist who needs for *a) human appreciation and dignity; b) financial evaluation; c) professional appreciation; d) security and protection.*

According to the first element, *human appreciation and dignity*, the journalists in Albania talk about an obvious lack of ethics in the newsrooms, where even though work professionally, the reward they get is simply a bigger workload. The data analysed above show that they do not feel appreciated in the premises where they work.

The second element is the financial reward: Financial rewarding is the main factor why the journalists abandon their profession. According to the former journalists' interviews in the function of this study, they often leave journalism reluctantly. The journalists' salaries are among the most unindexed salaries in the Albanian market. They are minimalist and do not provide guarantees for the youngsters, who over the time, face life requirements and of course, family establishment.

Third element: professional appreciation. Albanian media have almost no typical human resource structures, except for 2 or 3 big television channels. Often, the owner, the director or the editor-in chief carries out this job. As this structure does not exist, there are no tasks to be carried out. The tasks it would have to carry out do not exist either. The main task is to follow the professional growth of journalists and above all their continuous training to be adapted to the market.

Fourth element, security and protection for journalists. Data collected throughout this study, but also a number of testimonies of journalists and media critics, push us to raise some questions that require addressing immediate solutions.

How many Albanian journalists feel safe in their work professionally? In fact, how many of the chronicle journalists feel safe and protected in the face of criminal structures? This is about taking permanent measures to guarantee journalists, not just police protection. Why should a journalist remain loyal to journalism and the media when faced with such a picture? He/she will certainly look for the best opportunity for himself/herself and his/her family, and sooner or later, he/she will leave this profession, to move to safer directions, where he sees more appreciation.

Fourth plan: *Direct link with economic stages the relevant country goes through*

Media cannot be treated as a field in itself without any connection to other fields of society and the place where it operates. It is linked by thousands of threads to economic, political, social and cultural developments. In this regard, a factor that influenced the last decade is the development of technology. This caused millions of Euros / Dollars of marketing budgets to flow from the media and go directly to Facebook, YouTube or Instagram.

Politicians once dominated television and newspapers. So are businesses. But today,

we note that online communication has become of key importance. Today, political or corporate campaigns often start first on social media and other online channels, and then move on to traditional media. A decade ago it was quite the opposite. In the face of such a situation, media are under pressure from a lack of advertising budgets. It seems impossible for the owners to bear these costs or problems themselves. They charge those to the journalists, who are at the bottom of the chain. Journalists, according to the owners, have to make sacrifices by receiving minimalist salaries, while the part about bonuses, additional salaries or salary increases is hardly discussed at all.

Albania seems to have passed the stage of Foreign businesses, which contributed since the early 2000s with a new business climate, more Liquidity turnover etc. Today, we are at the stage where even those large regional or European businesses are withdrawing from the Albanian market, leaving room for a handful of Albanian businesses, which do not know how they will manage the seas sets. Some of them even own some of these media. But, the truth is that there is no development movement, except for the initial campaign to introduce these media to the market, where seeking to attract the attention of viewers and increase the audience, they make aggressive public relations and marketing campaigns on the city streets with city lights, billboards and even large billboards on national roads. Journalists themselves turn into unpaid characters to promote the media where they work, not knowing how long they will remain in that media.

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