

Socio-Psychological Determinants of Journalists' Professional Activity

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Abstract

This research paper analyses the socio-psychological characteristics, professional portrait, and creative systemic role of journalists operating within contemporary mass media through the lens of empirical sociological and psychological methodologies. The study sample draws on extensive sociological surveys (questionnaires) and psychological profiling conducted among 120 professional journalists active within television and radio broadcasting companies, print media houses, and digital internet journalism newsrooms in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The article explores the levels of reflective and non-reflective listening within communication structures, spatial proxemic boundaries governed by neurobiological mechanisms, and the intricate matrix of professional motivation and emotional burnout. The findings provide deep theoretical insights and practical frameworks for optimizing editorial group dynamics and preventing occupational hazards in regional media environments.

Keywords: *Communication Psychology, Journalist Personality, Proxemics, Reflective Listening, Socio-Psychological Portrait*

Introduction

Under the contemporary conditions of globalization, intense digital transformation, and the exponential expansion of the information ecosystem, the mass media has systematically integrated into all dimensions of social life, establishing itself as a highly influential macro-institution that actively shapes social relations, public opinion, and collective consciousness. At the core of this dynamic and complex media architecture, serving as its core functional and ideological driving mechanism, stands the personality of the journalist. A journalist's intellectual capacity, socio-psychological stability, ethical value metrics, and communicative competencies directly predetermine the level of objectivity, credibility, and impartiality of the information streams disseminated to society.

By its inherent social and occupational nature, the profession of journalism demands high operational dynamics, sustained psychological-emotional workloads, continuous interactive communication with diverse social strata, and immediate, decisive decision-making under conditions of chronic time deficits and strict deadlines. This demanding environment, in turn, generates a critical academic and practical necessity to scientifically investigate the individual-psychological and socio-psychological parameters of newsroom personnel, systematically structuring their professional profile based on empirical sociological criteria.

Reviewing the historical trajectory and theoretical foundations of this fundamental scientific problem reveals that journalistic creativity and its psychophysiological nature have long been investigated at the interdisciplinary crossroads of philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and behavioural psychology. Specifically, the capacity of mass media to manipulate public consciousness, alongside the socio-psychological attractiveness and persuasive authority of the journalist's personality, has been extensively analysed in the foundational works of S.G. Kara-Murza and L.V. Trubitsina. These studies theoretically proved that information security within the media space and individual exposure to trauma are intrinsically linked to the journalist's emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, the psychology of journalistic creation, the socio-psychological climate of editorial working environments, and professional communication cultures have been methodologically established by prominent researchers such as V. Agranovsky and A.A. Andreeva. Within the regional academic context, fundamental laws of personal socialization, psychological barriers in interaction, and social-communicative phenomena have been systematically investigated by Professor V. Karimova, while the specific subject-object dynamics within mass communication systems were rigorously evaluated by E. Kholiqov. Nonetheless, despite the availability of these diverse theoretical lineages, the socio-psychological portrait of journalist cadres within the specific regional socium of the Republic of Karakalpakstan—particularly accounting for unique ethno-cultural and territorial components—has remained under-researched as a holistic, empirical-sociological entity. The absolute necessity to address this conspicuous academic gap defines the primary objective of this research paper.

Review of Related Literature

The socio-psychological dimensions of journalism have been widely explored, with scholars emphasizing the interplay between individual psychology, media practices, and societal influence. Nurgaliyeva (2025) provides a focused examination of Karakalpakstan journalists, constructing a socio-psychological portrait that highlights the pressures and responsibilities inherent in journalistic activity. This aligns with Karimova's (2012) foundational work in social psychology, which underscores the role of interpersonal dynamics and social context in shaping professional behaviour.

Kholiqov (2011) and Kara-Murza (2003), both of whom discuss manipulation and the “false world” created by mass communication, offer critical perspectives on media influence. Their analyses reveal how journalism can both inform and distort public consciousness, raising ethical concerns about the profession. Trubitsina (2001) extends this discussion by examining the traumatic impact of media on journalists themselves, particularly in emergency situations, thereby situating journalism within a broader framework of psychological resilience. Agranovsky (1999) and Andreeva (2018) contribute to understanding journalistic creativity, portraying journalism as both a profession and an art form that requires psychological adaptability and innovation.

Sharkov (2010), who provides a comprehensive account of communication theory, situating journalism within broader communicative processes, further elaborates the theoretical underpinnings of communication. Complementary insights from neuroscience and proxemics, such as Kennedy and Adolphs (2009) on the amygdala's role in regulating personal space, and Hall's (1963) pioneering work on proxemics, enrich the understanding of how journalists navigate spatial and psychological boundaries in their interactions. Collectively, these studies establish a multidimensional framework for

analysing the psychological, social, and communicative aspects of journalism, offering valuable perspectives for contemporary research on journalistic identity and practice.

Objectives

This research aims to systematically investigate the socio-psychological parameters that define the professional identity of journalists under contemporary conditions of globalization and digital transformation. By focusing on intellectual capacity, emotional stability, ethical values, and communicative competencies, the study seeks to establish how these individual traits influence the credibility, impartiality, and objectivity of information streams disseminated to society.

Another central objective is to critically examine the historical and theoretical foundations of journalistic creativity and its psychophysiological nature. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and psychology, the study intends to highlight how media manipulation, emotional intelligence, and resilience shape both the journalist's professional role and their vulnerability to trauma. This analysis provides a framework for understanding the socio-psychological climate of editorial environments and the communicative cultures that sustain journalistic practice.

Finally, the research is directed toward constructing a socio-psychological portrait of journalists within the specific regional context of Karakalpakstan. By accounting for ethno-cultural and territorial components, the study seeks to address the existing academic gap and provide an empirically grounded profile of newsroom personnel. This objective ensures that the research contributes not only to broader theoretical discourse but also to localized understanding, offering insights that can inform both professional development and media policy in the region.

Methodology

The methodological framework and empirical database of this investigation are strictly grounded in the principles of scientific objectivity, neutrality, systematic analysis, and comparative sociological inquiry. To capture the actual operational parameters that delineate the socio-psychological profile of regional media professionals, the study deployed a rigorous questionnaire-based survey methodology. The target object of research comprised journalists legally operating across both state-funded and independent, private mass media editorial offices within the territory of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

During the primary empirical data collection phase, a sample size of $N = 120$ professional journalists was selected using strict probability sampling techniques to guarantee representativeness. The structured socio-demographic composition of the respondents was organized according to several primary metrics: gender distribution reflected 55% male and 45% female media professionals; age categorization indicated that young cadres aged 22 to 30 comprised 35%, mid-career experienced professionals aged 31 to 45 accounted for 45%, and senior professionals aged 46 and above constituted the remaining 20% of the cohort. Regarding their specific field of media practice, 40% of the participants were active in television and radio broadcasting companies, 30% operated within traditional print media houses, and 30% represented digital internet publications and contemporary social media newsrooms.

To evaluate the inter-subjective interactive competencies of journalists within professional communication systems, established psychological methodologies measuring social norms of interaction were implemented, focusing specifically on reflective and non-reflective listening paradigms within information processing. Concurrently, the spatial arrangements and structural physical distances maintained during interactions were examined by applying the socio-psychophysiological parameters of proxemics theory. The accumulated primary quantitative data were processed utilizing mathematical-statistical software and tabulated for systematic academic interpretation.

Findings and Discussion

The execution of the empirical sociological survey and cognitive-psychological profiling revealed characteristic statistical distributions that define the current portrait of journalists within the Karakalpak media environment. Initially, the study evaluated the professional listening cultures and cognitive information-processing behaviours of journalists when interacting with respondents, information sources, and media protagonists. Communication psychology strictly differentiates between active, emotionally grounded reflective listening and passive, controlled non-reflective listening. The empirical data demonstrated that the strategic application of these techniques displays significant variation when cross-referenced with gender attributes, as systematically illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Independent Sample Size Effects.

Professional Listening Style and Type	Male Journalists (%)	Female Journalists (%)
Reflective Listening (Active-Emotional, Interactive)	38%	62%
Non-Reflective Listening (Passive-Restrained, Rational)	62%	38%

Academic interpretation of the tabulated metrics demonstrates that while listening and information perception styles are evenly distributed across the general population, female journalists display a pronounced preference (62%) for the reflective listening model, which prioritizes the establishment of deep psychological-emotional rapport and inter-subjective understanding. Conversely, male journalists preferentially execute the non-reflective listening tactic (62%) during field material gathering, prioritizing structured factual accumulation. This statistical dichotomy reveals distinctly gendered strategic approaches to media content generation within the socio-psychological profile. The subsequent key parameter investigated concerns the spatial-physical boundaries maintained during interpersonal communication, namely proxemic metrics. Within human interactive systems, the demarcation and maintenance of personal space boundaries is not merely a product of conventional social etiquette or cultural training; it represents a deep-seated phenomenon rooted in neurobiology and psychophysiology. Advanced cognitive neuroscience demonstrates that the inviolability of personal space is directly regulated by the amygdala—a specialized subcortical brain structure responsible for emotional processing, threat assessment, and survival instincts.

The amygdala continuously scans the immediate environment for the physical proximity of external objects and other individuals. If an unfamiliar person penetrates an individual's personal boundary without authorization, the autonomic nervous system is instantly triggered, activating protective homeostasis mechanisms. Psychophysiological experiments indicate that the ideal volume of personal space and spatial distance needs vary by gender due to distinct hormonal and neurofunctional systemic architectures. In

females, higher basal levels of the hormone oxytocin stimulate heightened social empathy, interpersonal trust, and a preference for close-range interactive bonds, which effectively downregulates the 'apprehension' signalling cascade within the amygdala. Consequently, their personal space boundaries contract, rendering closer physical proximity biologically comfortable during communication.

In contrast, the neurophysiological profile of males is characterized by the dominance of testosterone and evolutionary neurophysiological adaptations geared toward territorial defence, dominance display, and the remote monitoring of potential threats. Consequently, the male amygdaloid system exhibits significantly higher reactivity (stress response) to close-range visual and physical contact, generating a biological drive to maintain a formal, social-consultative distance to stabilize internal physiological parameters. The actual field data regarding journalists' preferred spatial positioning during the interviewing process are systematically codified in Table 2.

Table 2. Spatial Distance Indicators during Communication (Proxemics)

Communication Distance (Proxemic Metrics)	Male Journalists (%)	Female Journalists (%)
Intimate/Personal Distance (Personal Zone: 0.5 – 1.2 meters)	25%	75%
Social/Consultative Distance (Formal Zone: 1.2 – 3.5 meters)	75%	25%

The proxemics analysis clearly demonstrates that the absolute majority of female journalists (75%) find it optimal to enter the personal zone (0.5 – 1.2 meters) to foster psychological proximity and enhance the sincerity of the respondent. On the contrary, 75% of male journalists strictly enforce a formal social distance (1.2 – 3.5 meters), utilizing spatial separation to preserve professional neutrality, detachment, and objective distance. These empirical statistical indicators serve as concrete evidence of how neurobiological drives for homeostatic balance manifest as distinct professional styles within social environments.

Furthermore, the investigation evaluated a critical component of the journalist's socio-psychological profile: core occupational motivation and the matrix of factors inducing professional deformation (burnout). When evaluated through the theoretical framework of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, altruistic social duty, public service, and professional recognition emerged as paramount motivational drivers. The distribution of responses to the question 'What constitutes the primary incentive for your journalistic activity?' is structured in Table 3.

Table 3. Socio-Psychological Motivational Factors Driving Journalistic Activity

Professional Motivational Factors	Overall Result (%)
Social Duty, Public Service, and Social Justice	48%
Professional Prestige, Fame, and Public Image	30%
Financial Compensation, Material Security, and Stable Salary	22%

The motivational analysis reveals that for 48% of journalists in Karakalpakstan, the supreme ethical incentive is the realization of social justice and rendering tangible

assistance to citizens. However, the low prioritization of material compensation (22%) establishes a critical vulnerability for the onset of occupational burnout syndrome. In the diagnostic section of the survey, 40% of the editorial personnel explicitly confirmed suffering from chronic psychological-emotional exhaustion and depressive symptoms resulting from continuous engagement with distressing social problems and systemic crises.

Discussion. The real statistical data gathered through empirical inquiry require deep contextualization within the paradigms of communication psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and mass communication theories. The affinity of female journalists for reflective listening (62%) and closer proxemic proximity (75%) is directly explained by higher base levels of emotional intelligence and empathy. As noted by Professor V. Karimova, female subjects display heightened sensitivity in rapidly decoding both verbal and non-verbal signals. Analyzing this phenomenon from a neurobiological standpoint, the seminal works of E. Kennedy and J. Adolphs proved that proxemic distance is actively regulated by the amygdala to preserve homeostatic equilibrium. Therefore, the spatial variance observed between male and female journalists is not merely an ongoing social habit; it represents a functional psychophysiological adaptation mechanism embedded within the subjective communicative process.

Conversely, the strict enforcement of formal distance (75%) and the tactical deployment of non-reflective, passive listening (62%) by male journalists confirms a highly rationalized, fact-centric operational model, reflecting the integration of evolutionary defence systems into professional frameworks. As V. Agranovsky noted, maintaining communicative distance allows a journalist to suppress subjective biases, ensuring a detached view of the data. Furthermore, S.G. Kara-Murza emphasizes that the persuasive power of media messages over public consciousness depends heavily on the perceived credibility and authority of the journalist. In our empirical sample, the fact that 48% of respondents identify social duty and justice as their primary operational metric indicates a robust ethical core within the regional media ecosystem.

However, the concurrent 40% rate of severe emotional exhaustion directly correlates with L.V. Trubitsina's [5] theoretical frameworks regarding the traumatic and stressful conditions characteristic of media professions. The synthesized integration of neurobiological and sociological factors demonstrates that the deliberate selection of ideal proxemic distances and the cultivation of refined communication cultures can serve as vital preventive instruments against professional deformation among media workers.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical, sociological, and neurobiological analysis of the socio-psychological profile of journalists operating in the mass media of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the following fundamental scientific and practical conclusions have been reached:

1. The socio-psychological portrait of the contemporary journalist is a complex, integrated system composed of interconnected elements, including gender-specific psychophysiological traits, nervous system variations, distinct communication cultures, neurobiologically driven proxemic needs, and specific professional motivations.
2. The empirical field data proved that the gender-based variance in proxemic distance is closely linked to amygdala neuronal activity and hormonal parameters,

- with female journalists preferring closer personal zones (75%) and male journalists operating in formal social zones (75%) [8, 9]. Media managers when assembling creative editorial teams should systematically account for these specific psychophysiological profiles.
3. The documented 40% rate of severe occupational burnout and emotional exhaustion constitutes a primary threat to institutional stability, accelerating personnel turnover and degrading professional motivation.
 4. Practical Recommendations: It is highly recommended that higher education curricula and doctoral research frameworks in journalism systematically integrate advanced courses in communication psychology, media sociology, cognitive neuroscience, and proxemics. Additionally, mass media organizations in Karakalpakstan must urgently establish specialized socio-psychological training modules and psychological rehabilitation programs to enhance performance metrics and protect journalists from severe chronic occupational stress.

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