

INFORMATION OVERLOAD (IO): Editors' perceptions and coping strategies

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Introduction & Theoretical Background

- IO **negatively** affects one's **work performance and well-being**.
- News editors are quintessential knowledge workers, but **the journalistic perspective is scarce in IO research**.
- As IO can emerge in various contexts and journalists' work-nonwork boundaries are blurred, a **complex framework on IO is needed**.
- To provide a holistic view of editors' perspectives on IO, we built on Graf and Antoni's (2023) model and adapted it to the journalistic context.

Methodology

- **Design:** Cross-sectional case study
- **Participants:** News editors from a Central European news agency (N=11)
- **Sampling:** Maximum variation sampling
- **Methods:**
nonparticipant observation (January 6-19, 2025),
semi-structured interviews (February 10 - March 6, 2025)
- **Analysis:** Reflective thematic analysis

Research Questions

- RQ1:** How do editors perceive IO in work context?
RQ2: How do editors perceive IO in nonwork context?
RQ3: What strategies do editors employ to cope with IO?

Twelve days straight without a single day off, it does show a little bit in the way the brain is clogged with information. Especially as you get towards the end of the second week, you feel more of that mental fatigue. (Jana)

It's mainly about the assigning position, I mean, multitasking. Because really, it's almost a rule that at one point you're getting phone calls, emails, plus we use editorial chat to make arrangements (...) and then you've got somebody talking to you face to face, it's a hell of a multitasking, really. (Šárka)

INFLUENCING FACTORS

- A) Personal factors**
- experience and skill ▼
 - sense of responsibility ▲
 - passion for work ▼
 - personal interest in information-seeking / news consumption
- B) Technologies**
- agency system ▼
 - landline, mobile phones
 - Newsroom equipment (landline, monitors, TVs) ▲
- C) Task-related and contextual factors**
- available time ▲
 - multitasking ▲
 - interruptions ▲
 - communication ▼ (F-2-f, online, calls)
 - noisy environment ▲
 - shift scheduling
 - planning ahead ▲
 - busy x slow news day
 - little breaks ▲
 - everyday (nonwork) matters
- D) Team-related factors**
- colleagues' experience
 - staff size ▲
 - editorial position (assigning x publishing editor ▼)

COPING STRATEGIES

- | WORK | NONWORK |
|---|--|
| A) filtering & prioritizing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• experience and skills• digital filtering tools | A) filtering & withdrawing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• interest based• setting boundaries |
| B) emotional management <ul style="list-style-type: none">• remaining calm• resigned acceptance / habituation• passion for work (resource) | B) keeping up with news <ul style="list-style-type: none">• proactive preparation for work vs. constant exposure to information |
| C) teamwork <ul style="list-style-type: none">• task redistribution• relying on colleagues | C) leisure activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• outdoor activities• hobbies• family and friends |

CONSEQUENCES

- | WORK | NONWORK |
|--|--|
| A) behavioral <ul style="list-style-type: none">• cognitive fatigue (tiredness/exhaustion, reduced attention) | A) behavioral <ul style="list-style-type: none">• cognitive fatigue (tiredness/exhaustion, reduced attention) |
| B) experiential <ul style="list-style-type: none">• positive adrenalin• negative stress• fear of missing something important | B) experiential <ul style="list-style-type: none">• mental rush |
| C) health-related <ul style="list-style-type: none">• compromised breaks (lunch while working)• physical health (sore eyes, hand pain, lack of movement) | C) health-related <ul style="list-style-type: none">• possible spillover |

- CAUSES**
- A) Information quantity**
- volume of information
 - variety of sources (emails ▲, SNS)
- B) Information quality**
- relevance
 - ambiguity
 - structure
 - source credibility

cognitive load

PERCEIVED IO

The amount of stuff I read in a day, or sort of learn, and from how many sources, is just overwhelming. (Pavla)

There is (...) definitely less, much less information. (Markéta about nonwork context)

I need like an hour to do nothing at all or do something else. Like I'm walking home to clear my head, to kind of filter out that kind of buildup in that head that you just have in those 7 hours or 8 hours. (Vlasta)

Contributions

- **Workplace-centered issue:** Editors perceived IO as occasional and primarily originating at work (Benselin & Ragsdell, 2016).
- **Mostly negative consequences, but well-manageable:** Except positive adrenaline, IO lead to worsend work performance and well-being (Graf & Antoni, 2023).
- **Spillover effect:** IO did not seem to originate in editors' personal lives, but its effects could still extend beyond work through work-to-nonwork spillover (Pierce et al., 2016).
- **Context dependence:** IO is shaped by influencing factors, which either increase (▲) or decrease (▼) the likelihood of IO occurance (Jackson & Farzaneh, 2012).
- **Coping strategies vary across contexts:** Notably, keeping up with news turned as a double-edged mechanism.