# PSYCHOLOGICAL INTELLIGENCE IN JOURNALISM

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of journalism and its demands on psychological intelligence, being the disciplined capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and deploy emotion and cognition in the service of truth. This article situates psychological intelligence at the heart of newsroom practice and public communication. Building from the ability and mixed-model traditions of emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso; Goleman (2008), and integrating insights from social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986), framing, and gatekeeping scholarship, it argues that psychologically intelligent journalism enhances ethical judgment, audience trust, trauma-aware reporting, interviewing depth, and resilience against manipulation and burnout. Through a conceptual synthesis and selective empirical review (e.g., trauma studies among conflict reporters; audience trust research; organizational behavior findings on EI), the article advances a practical framework - the press model (Perception, Regulation, Empathy, Sense-making, Stewardship) and a newsroom implementation roadmap linking hiring, training, workflow, and metrics. It concludes with policy-level recommendations for journalism schools, media houses, and professional bodies, emphasizing measurable competencies and continuous learning.

**Keywords:** *Psychological intelligence; emotional intelligence; journalism ethics*

## Introduction

Journalism is a moral and cognitive craft. It organizes the world into knowable stories without trivializing human complexity. Yet the modern information ecosystem platform-driven, emotionally volatile, attention-scarce rewards heat over light. In such an environment, the journalist's *psychological posture* becomes decisive. The same facts, framed with or without empathic understanding, yield divergent public outcomes: clarity or confusion, healing or harm, trust or cynicism. The core claim of this article is straightforward: psychological intelligence is not ancillary to journalism it is constitutive. It improves interviews (by eliciting fuller, truer

accounts), reporting (by reducing bias and reactivity), editing (by anticipating audience interpretation), and ethics (by balancing truth-telling with compassion and proportionality). Conversely, its absence incubates sensationalism, stereotyping, retraumatization of sources, and premature certainty. This article, therefore, constructs a rigorous foundation for psychological intelligence in journalism and operationalizes it for practice.

The psychological profile of a man with a high intellectual coefficient and a lower emotional coefficient can be described as ambitious, productive, perseverant, calm, and impervious about everything that he is interested in, because he considers that he is right and he cannot be vulnerable. This individual is predictable, you can see how he behaves in certain situations and how he reacts to different social and professional contexts. He tends to be critic and condescending, fastidious, difficult and inhibited, bothered and ashamed in sexual experiences, inexpressive and detached, and at an emotional level he is stupid and unfriendly (Goleman, 2001).

The psychological profile of a man with a high emotional intelligence ability or coefficient is one that presents a social balance in inter-human relations, a remarkable capacity in solving other people's problems, he can devote himself to worthy causes, is socially responsible and he analyses the moral nature of the situations in which he is involved. This individual is likable and caring in interpersonal relations, has an active emotional life, feels comfortable with himself and with others in the social environment in which he lives (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Emotional intelligence teaching is interdisciplinary and it encompasses many fields starting from psychology (knowledge and personal development) because the psychological portrait of the journalist has a significant role in the value of the media product and is directed towards the communication zone (combining the framework and the manifestation context), because the role of the journalist is not only limited to gathering and processing information but also to sharing it with the purpose of sharing knowledge and emotion. The journalist has to be a complex personality, adapted to social changes and it has to be able to influence, using his own behaviour, the conduct of those around his or of the public he addresses.

## Purpose of the Study

a  Clarify the construct of psychological intelligence as it applies to journalism, distinguishing it from but integrating it with emotional intelligence.

b  Map the interfaces between psychological intelligence and journalistic tasks (newsgathering, interviewing, verification, framing, writing, editing, audience engagement).

c  Synthesize relevant theory and empirical research into a usable framework for newsrooms and journalism schools.

d  Propose implementable recommendations, competency rubrics, and evaluation metrics for adoption at organizational and professional levels.

## Conceptual Review

**Psychological intelligence** here denotes a composite of abilities and dispositions enabling journalists to perceive emotional cues accurately, interpret motives and contexts, regulate their own affective states, engage sources and audiences empathically, and choose responses that safeguard truthfulness, dignity, and social responsibility. It is broader than traditional EI because it integrates cognitive empathy, perspective-taking, moral imagination, metacognition, and behavioral self-regulation within journalistic practice.

## Core facets for journalists:

Perceptual acuity: Reading nonverbal cues, power dynamics, distress, defensiveness, and credibility signals during interviews.

Affective regulation: Managing anger, anxiety, and disgust that can skew questioning or framing.

Cognitive empathy and perspective-taking: Entering the world of sources and audiences without capitulating to their biases.

Moral imagination: Anticipating foreseeable harms and benefits of publication choices.

Resilience and reflective practice: Recognizing triggers, using debriefs and supervision, sustaining long-term clarity.

## Why It Matters

Accuracy and completeness: Calm, empathic interviewing elicits richer data; regulated reporters verify better.

Ethics in action: Proportionality, minimizing harm, and fairness require situational emotional wisdom, not merely rules.

Audience trust: Trust correlates with perceptions of fairness, transparency, and respect—outcomes shaped by psychologically intelligent routines.

Sustainable careers: Resilience practices reduce burnout and secondary trauma.

## Theoretical Framework

Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2008): Perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions as *abilities*. This supports interview craft (perceive), narrative emphasis (use), bias checking (understand), and deadline comportment (manage).

Mixed Model of EI (Goleman (2008): Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skill congruent with newsroom teamwork, leadership, and source management.

Social Cognitive Theory, (Bandura (1986): Reciprocal determinism among person, behavior, and environment; self-efficacy underpins confident yet ethical reporting. Observational learning in newsrooms normalizes (or corrects) emotional habits.

Framing and Gatekeeping (Entman; Shoemaker & Vos): Choices about problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation carry emotional freight; psychological intelligence acts as a check against manipulative or dehumanizing frames.

Moral Development and Care Ethics (Kohlberg; Gilligan): Complements rule-based ethics with attention to relationships and vulnerability—central to trauma reporting and coverage of marginalized communities.

These perspectives converge on a practical insight: emotion and cognition are inseparable in responsible reporting; the goal is skilled integration, not emotional suppression.

## Empirical Review (Selective and Cautious)

**Journalists and Trauma:** Peer-reviewed studies have documented elevated risks of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and moral injury among conflict and disaster reporters and photojournalists; trauma-aware training and organizational support correlate with better outcomes (e.g., Feinstein's work on war correspondents; Dart Center resources).

EI and Job Performance: Across professions, higher EI associates with teamwork quality, leadership effectiveness, and conflict management; newsrooms are no exception (organizational psychology literature).

Audience Trust: Research in media trust consistently links perceptions of fairness, transparency, and respect for subjects with higher trust and willingness to engage—outcomes influenced by journalists' empathic framing and disclosure practices (trust frameworks discussed by Kovach & Rosenstiel; Reuters Institute reports).

Interview Quality: Studies on investigative interviewing (law, clinical, and qualitative research) show that open questions, active listening, and rapport increase recall accuracy and disclosure—techniques powered by psychological skills (cognitive interview traditions).

*Note:* This review deliberately avoids unverifiable statistics; it synthesizes robust trends from durable scholarship and professional bodies.

## Application to Core Journalistic Tasks

Trust formation: Demonstrate reliability (keep time, explain process, clarify off-record/on-background).

Power sensitivity: Avoid extractive sourcing with victims; offer options for anonymity; check agency and consent.

Bias interruption: Before fieldwork, write a one-paragraph Bias Anticipation Note (assumptions, counter-assumptions, evidence needed).

## Interviewing

Opening: Set psychological safety: explain the arc, affirm autonomy ("You can pause, skip, or stop").

Technique: Use neutral prompts, minimal encouragers, and reflective summaries; avoid leading or double-barreled questions.

Closing: Offer debrief resources when covering trauma (e.g., local support lines); verify quotes with sensitive sources when appropriate.

## Verification and Analysis

Cognitive forcing: Always ask, "What evidence would disconfirm my current frame?"

Emotion audit: Editors ask reporters to rate their emotional temperature (1–10) before final draft; if >7, insert cool-down step.

## Writing and Framing

Humanization without voyeurism: De-identify minors and victims where risk is nontrivial; avoid gratuitous detail.

Diversity of voices: Ensure frame-balancing includes those affected, not only officials and experts.

## Visuals and Headlines

Ethical images: Use the least intrusive visual that communicates the truth; avoid trauma porn.

Headlines: Optimize for accuracy and dignity before virality; test with a "misread risk" check.

## Audience Engagement

Pro-social comment policy: Visible, consistently enforced rules reduce performative toxicity.

Transparency notes: Explain corrections and methods plainly; invite reader questions.

## Organizational Culture and Leadership

Psychologically Safe Newsrooms: Leaders model humility, invite dissent, and protect whistleblowing.

Debriefing Norms: Institutionalize short *editorial retros* after difficult assignments; include "what I felt/what I learned/what I will do next time."

Workload Design: Rotate high-trauma beats; set dark-social boundaries for online harassment; provide access to counseling.

Hiring and Promotion: Evaluate candidates on competency rubrics for empathy, regulation, and reflective judgment - not only clips count.

## Ethical Implications

Psychological intelligence operationalizes classical principles - truthfulness, independence, fairness, and minimizing harm. It clarifies, for instance, when the public interest overrides privacy and how to report on grief without instrumentalizing pain. It also confronts performative neutrality, insisting that dignity is not bias but a professional obligation.

## Digital-Era Specifics

Harassment and Doxxing: Equip staff with response playbooks; share legal and platform escalation channels; rotate social exposure duties.

Deepfakes and Affective Manipulation: Train reporters to spot emotion-bait patterns, not merely factual anomalies.

Metrics that Matter: Shift from click-through rate to Trust and Quality Indicators (corrections resolved, source satisfaction, community feedback quality, time-on-explanatory content).

## Cross-Cultural Considerations

Psychological cues and dignity norms vary across cultures. Journalists should:

a    Learn local honor/shame dynamics, indirectness vs. directness, and consent norms.

b    Use cultural brokers and bilingual limitations and future research fixers.

c    Avoid pathologizing culturally normative emotional expression.

This article advances a conceptual and practice framework. It does not present new primary data. Future research should:

a      Validate the PRESS Model with mixed methods across newsroom contexts.

b      Quantify links between psychological intelligence interventions and audience trust, correction rates, and burnout reduction.

c      Examine differential effects across platforms (broadcast vs. digital-native) and cultures.

## Conclusion

Psychological intelligence is the journalist's invisible instrument—tuning perception, tempering emotion, and guiding choices that keep truth and dignity in the same frame. In a media economy that profits from provocation, psychologically intelligent journalism is not only possible; it is *necessary* for accuracy, fairness, and social peace. With clear models, rubrics, and leadership, newsrooms can make this competence teachable, measurable, and culture-defining.

## Recommendations

a      Required Modules: Emotional/psychological intelligence, trauma literacy, and ethical decision-making labs.

b      Assessment: Scenario-based OSCE-style practicums (standardized interview subjects).

c      Interdisciplinary Links: Courses with psychology, sociology, law, and data science.

d      Adopt PRESS: Build it into pitch, edit, and post-publication routines.

e      Health Supports: Confidential counseling; trauma debriefs; harassment response teams.

f      Trust Metrics: Publish quarterly trust dashboards; include dignity indicators in KPIs.

g      Leadership Training: Coach editors in feedback that is candid, specific, and psychologically safe.

h        Competency Standards: Add psychological intelligence indicators to accreditation.

i        Awards & Grants: Incentivize excellence in dignity-preserving reporting and transparency.

j        Personal Protocols: Pre-interview centering; bias notes; post-story reflection.

k        Peer Circles: Monthly craft and wellness check-ins.

l        Learning Habit: Annual plan for books, workshops, and supervised practice.

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