

“[CORPORATE] NEEDS TO ACT LIKE THEY GIVE A F***”: A QUALITATIVE STUDY
ON PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE LOCAL NEWS INDUSTRY.

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By

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A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE LOCAL NEWS INDUSTRY

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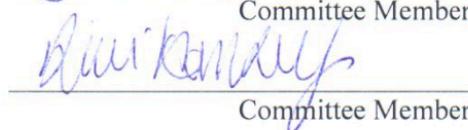
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Abstract

Local news research has shown rampant turnover in the industry, with journalists pointing to factors such as pay, schedule, management, direction of the industry or content, increased workloads, and family. Over the past three decades, corporate media companies have continued to acquire local news stations across the country, leading to personnel cuts that leave those leftover with the additional responsibility and stress with zero reward for the extra daily effort. While the number of TV news employees in the industry reached a peak in recent years, some newsroom leaders saw journalists leaving more than ever before. As turnover is a consequence of perceived organizational support (POS), this study looks at these experiences between the station and the journalist and the corporation and the journalist to understand the current experience, the role it plays in turnover, and where those in the field wish changes were made.

In this qualitative study, the researcher provides a narrative analysis of TV journalists' experiences associated with POS with their stations and corporations, their decisions to stay or leave, as well as industry fixes they believe could retain employees. In all, the participants' experiences vary greatly. Commonalities in station POS experiences show that supervisor support, peer support, and journalistic integrity are areas stations can develop to increase perceived support. The findings prove points of research stating supervisor support is critical for retaining young professionals in an industry, peers support is effective in retaining workers locally, and the journalistic profession is of higher importance than the workplace for local journalists (Hill, 2018a; Pease, 1991, Russo, 1998). Disconnect, labor contracts, and again journalistic integrity are areas the corporation could look at to increase POS. These findings are

consistent with research stating journalists have a greater connection to the profession versus the employer (Russo, 1998) and that journalists want salary increases as incentive to stay (Reinary, 2014). Journalists who experienced low POS often left the industry or the station. Journalists with positive POS experiences were more likely to re-sign contracts with their current stations, but sometimes personal life plays a role in their decision to stay or leave the station. Like journalists of previous studies, these participants point to needed changes in areas of pay, managerial support, career growth opportunities, the quality of their news product, and human resources practices. This information adds to the understanding of why TV journalists leave their stations and/or careers by pointing out areas of POS that are lacking from either the stations or the company that owns it. It also adds to POS research, by focusing specifically on the TV news industry post Covid-19. The importance of journalistic ethics and products are important to journalists, which is not a POS antecedent in any other industry. Additionally, the study – while limited in participants, points to industry fixes these journalists agree need to happen to keep experienced journalists in the industry providing needed information to the public. Future research should expand to learn of POS experiences of other newsroom employees such as producers, editors, production personnel, and assignment editors. Additionally, future research should focus on the POS of news stations' middle management to better understand the support newsroom leadership receives from the executive level to support newsroom employees.

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Introduction

The continuous acquisitions of stations across the country resulted in media for profit corporations buying out other companies until the organization owned stations across over 100 TV markets, with many of them in the same markets (*TV Stations at Sinclair Broadcast Group*, n.d.; *Nexstar Media Group, Inc | Stations*, n.d.). TV markets are determined by Designated Market Area (DMA), which are regions in 210 geographical locations across the United States where local television audience viewership is measured by Nielsen (*DMA® Regions | Nielsen*, n.d.). The measurement of household population in the DMA region allows the organization to rank DMA based on viewing size (*DMA® Regions | Nielsen*, n.d.). While corporates were chasing profits, researchers were showing journalists were leaving the industry due to the direction of the content, work-life balance, pay, and family concerns (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Legore, 2009). Journalism still plays a vital role in society; however, trust from the community, support from owners, and staff all decreased while demands increased. It is vital to support these roles to ensure Americans are receiving factual and critical information. This brings about the validity of studying perceived organizational support (POS), which leads to decreased turnover rates and absenteeism, and increased productivity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This study focuses on the perceptions of organizational support in local TV news from the perspective of local on-air field journalists and how the POS experiences relate to station and industry turnover.

General Background

Throughout centuries journalism has transformed how it is produced and consumed along with technological advancements while performing an essential role in

democracy set forth in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. In a 1978 Supreme Court ruling, Justice Potter Stewart’s concurring opinion stated:

That the First Amendment speaks separately of freedom of speech and freedom of the press is no constitutional accident, but an acknowledgment of the critical role played by the press in American society. The Constitution requires sensitivity to that role, and to the special needs of the press in performing it effectively. (*Houchins v. KQED*, 1978, p. 17)

The news industry changed forever in 1980 when Ted Turner launched the world's first live, 24-hour global news: Cable News Network (CNN) (*Ted Turner's biography*, 2007). Other national organizations, NBC, CBS, and ABC, and for-profit local news station owners followed suit to operate news on a 24-hour schedule as the hours of daily content produced at local stations steadily increased, and continues today (Papper & Henderson, 2023c).

Deregulation of media agencies in the 1990s shifted the financial roles between stations and corporate ownership and the ability of corporations to own stations in the same TV markets. In the late 1980s, NBC looked to cut back on funding affiliate content, which is a national programming partnership between a local and national news provider. “NBC, ABC and CBS each spends about \$140 million a year on payments to affiliates,” (Stevenson, 1989, para. 11). NBC’s solution was to change their rate of payment from being based on market size, and the same as other market stations, to being based on ratings to provide incentive to do better to gain more funding (Stevenson, 1989). The result of the issue brought forth by national networks was a radical shift in how station affiliations were handled by the television networks, “by

charging the stations fees to carry certain programs,” (Carter, 1992, para. 1). The Telecommunications Act of 1996 was the first major overhaul of telecommunication law in over 60 years (*Telecommunications Act of 1996 | Federal Communications Commission*, 2013). The act repealed all national ownership limits for radio (Winseck & Jin, 2011). Winseck and Jin (2011) add the change lifted a national cap for ownership of television stations from 12, now the only limit the nationwide percentage of station reach cannot surpass “35 percent of the nationwide television audience (Section 202 in the Act)” (p. 171). The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) stated the goal of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 the “is to let anyone enter any communications business – to let any communications business compete in any market against any other,” (*Telecommunications Act of 1996*, 2013). Also in 1996, Fox News was launched as a national cable news channel to the appeal of conservative audiences (Bartlett, 2015). It is also the year media giant Nexstar started its operation (*Nexstar Media Group, Inc | Company History*, n.d.).

Young adults may be drawn to the glamorous and exciting broadcast journalism industry they see on television, yet studies reveal that many do not stay in the business (Papper & Henderson, 2022). Turnover is common in the news industry, but Legore (2009) questioned if organizations presume turnover is due to news employees moving up the market ladder instead of journalists leaving the industry altogether. Research points to poor management and support on both the station and corporate level, leaving journalists to turn to adjacent careers for higher paying jobs with much smaller workloads (Pease, 1991). Additionally, other researchers show that some journalists leave due to having to do more with less, doing more work for less money, newsroom

ethics, and feeling like content is only to fill shows rather than inform the public, lack of growth opportunities, and lack of schedule flexibility (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Legore, 2009; Reinardy, 2014). Some journalists’ passion for their role in society helps them push past the difficulties of irregular hours and low income. However, journalists’ perceptions of the news product quality can affect their passion for the job (Entis, 2023; Legore, 2009). LeGore’s concern about whether companies pay enough attention to journalists leaving the TV news industry implies experienced journalists’ former and potential positions are being filled by inexperienced journalists in both big and small markets (2009).

This thesis seeks to understand POS experiences in local news and how it relates to turnover from 12 local news journalists – who report “in the field” or outside of the station – across the United States. These stations range from markets 25-50 through 100-125 (Nielsen, 2023) and range in corporate ownership sizes – owning fewer than 10 – to owning 200 stations. The questionnaire for semi-structured qualitative interviews was based on POS antecedents laid out by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002): fairness, supervisor support, and organizational reward. Additional interview questions seek to understand common changes participants wish the industry would make to retain experienced journalists.

In the news industry, the level of experience journalists have can determine their questions, angles, connections, and sometimes creative choices that may or may not enhance a report and keep audiences watching. As experienced journalists leave for high-paying communication roles (Entis, 2023), more inexperienced journalists step into reporter positions in higher markets without working in small, entry-level, TV

markets. As experienced journalists leave, those left behind deal with work overload, exhaustion, and develop cynical attitudes (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; Reinardy, 2013). The industry continues to shift with corporate budget cuts and market merging – seen in November 2023 as Sinclair cut positions at KTUL in Tulsa, Oklahoma to allow the Oklahoma City station, KOKH, to take over news production (Stanley, 2023). This is similar to other cities that lost local news due to Sinclair shutting down stations in 2023: Medford, Oregon; Toledo, Ohio; Gainesville, Florida; Sioux City, Iowa; and Omaha, Nebraska (*Sinclair-Owned Medford Station Ends*, 2023).

Purpose of the Study

Much like the journalists commenting on the Instagram profile “Thatnewslife” post, this researcher noticed countless people leaving their stations, and many going into another communication industry (ThatNewsLife, 2024). Positive perceptions of organizational support are related to decreased turnover rates; therefore, this study uses the understanding of POS relation to turnover to correlate situations of POS in the industry and a journalist’s decision to re-sign a contract with a station or not, or move to a new station or a new industry. Thus, it is important to understand the current state of POS in local stations and the companies that own them. Then, compare reporters’ turnover intentions to their POS experiences. Due to broadcast journalists working on contracts with their organizations, each participant who is a current reporter is approaching a deadline to decide whether to stay or leave. Additionally, the participants who are former reporters provide details of their departure and reasonings behind it. This study, while documenting changes journalists hope for, seeks to understand what journalists are experiencing from their employers and how it contributes to their

decision to leave their chosen career. It also addresses areas journalists wish their employers focused on to increase incentive to stay.

Significance of the Study

High levels of POS are associated with decreased turnover rate, so a high turnover rate in the local news industry implies a possibility of low POS in newsrooms. As organizational support in local newsrooms should come from both the station and the respective corporate ownership group, it is important to understand how news workers perceive support from both levels to get a clearer understanding of POS in local news and how it connects to turnover in the industry. This qualitative study provides insight into newsrooms and how employees are treated and supported by their employer and those in leadership roles that are associated with the organization. The positive and negative POS experiences from both corporate and stations play a role in journalist's decisions to leave or stay at the station and/or in the industry.

Outlining journalist's experiences in a biographical narrative format provides an insight to the work-life balance of individuals working in an industry that has faced a broad range of change over decades of technological advancement and deregulations at the federal level. Local television advertising took a hit from the big tech competitors such as Facebook and Google taking that space. When the funds are lacking, cutting staff positions can make up for the financial gap. While many large media organizations continue to bring in high revenue, stations continue to shut down and newsrooms' staff dwindle across the United States and all markets (Neumann, 2023; *Nexstar Media Group Reports*, 2023; *Sinclair Reports Fourth Quarter 2022*, 2023). Even as the job market is competitive in some TV markets, others have news directors begging less

experienced prospective journalists or even journalism students to take up roles in their small newsrooms. Previous research states newsroom management often lacks the training they need to manage or support employees (Hill, 2018a), while this study indicates some journalists leave the station due to the lack of support from their supervisor. When the lack of supervisor support and fairness in the station is combined with the lack of resources from the organization such as insufficient wages for the influx of daily work requirements, the journalists look for better environments in industries that pay more. Currently journalists are stuck on one- to three-year contracts with high buyout fees or noncompete clauses to ensure the station has a recognizable face for a few years. Instead, maybe the corporate organizations should fund resources that support stations, station management, and frontline journalists doing the work in the communities to provide journalists with an incentive to stay at the station or with the company on their own accord.

Literature Review

POS and Turnover in Local News

POS is the understanding that employees develop beliefs about the extent their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kurtessis et al., 2015). POS is encouraged by employee's personifying the organizations' readiness to meet employees' needs and by rewarding employees for increased work efforts for the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). According to Eisenberger et al., (1986), POS fosters a social exchange process in which employees feel obligated to assist the organization in achieving its goals and objectives, and believe the more

work they put in will increase their reward from the organization. Researchers noted that when workers have socioemotional satisfaction (e.g. affiliation, esteem, approval, and emotional support), they begin to identify and develop relationships with the organization for which they work (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Reinardy, 2013). Meeting socioemotional demands leads to increased connection and commitment to the organization, a stronger desire to contribute to the company's success, and enhanced psychological well-being (Kurtessis et al., 2015). POS is found to increase an individual's felt obligation and is therefore positively associated with affective organizational commitment when socioemotional demands are met (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Kurtessis et al., 2015). Kurtessis et al. (2015) attribute positive perceived support with connection, desire to contribute to the organizational goals, and enhanced psychological well-being among employees. Higher levels of POS also leads to reduced turnover and absenteeism, and increased productivity (Rhoades & Eisenbeger, 2002). This research specifically focuses on the state of POS in local news as it relates to turnover in the local news industry.

The journalism industry is known for its non-supportive and sometimes cynical work culture (Dworznik, 2008; Underwood, 2011). Common reasons journalists leave the print and broadcast news industries include: lack of opportunity, insufficient financial compensation, family obligations, increase in demands with fewer resources, lack of mentorship opportunities, and disillusionment with the direction of their work or the industry (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; LeGore, 2009; Weaver et al., 2022). Years of budget cuts, staff reduction, increased workloads, and long irregular hours adds to the role stressors caused by constant deadlines (MacDonald et al., 2016). Plus, the role of a

journalist puts individuals at higher risk of developing mental health strains such as burnout, secondary traumatic stress (STS), post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and compassion fatigue (Dubberly et al., 2015; Dworznik, 2008). Not only do local news employees experience mental side effects from their coverage of traumatic situation (e.g. fatal car accidents, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, school shootings, global pandemic), many do not receive training to handle their own emotions or the emotions of their subordinates for newsroom managers (Hill, 2018a).

Reinardy's (2014) research on local journalists' job satisfaction used POS research to justify the need for more autonomy and rewarding good work to increase satisfaction. High organizational support is found to play an extrinsic role in job satisfaction, but still significantly correlates with it (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Reinardy, 2014). POS increases job satisfaction and in-turn employees generally suffer less from strains such as burnout, fatigue, anxiety, and headaches (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Reinardy, 2014). Employees' job satisfaction plays a critical role in organizational success, is positively related to organizational commitment, and negatively associated with turnover intentions (Mosadeghrad, 2014). The Mosagehrad (2014) research shows the implementation of Strategic Collaborative Quality Management (SCQM) in the workplace led to higher levels of job satisfaction and decreased turnover intentions among employees. Hoak (2021) found significant importance within supervisor and peer support during situations of change or increased stress in the newsroom. Keeping in line with many other researchers focusing on turnover in journalism industries, pay was ranked highest for its effect on job satisfaction (Reinardy, 2014). Though Singh and Loncar (2010) looked at the relation of pay and job satisfaction and turnover among

nurses rather than journalists, the research shows aspects of pay – level, structure, benefits and raises – should be taken into consideration when dealing with turnover in that area of work. Yet, other studies found little relation between level of pay and job or pay satisfaction, concluding that individuals with higher salaries are little more satisfied than those making considerably less (Judge et al., 2010).

POS and Organizational Support Theory (OST)

Organizational support theory (OST) explains that individuals tend to associate human-like characteristics with the organization they work for, which encourages the development of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The association is strengthened by the organization’s responsibility for its agents' actions, leaders' consistent and clear expectations for workers, the workplace’ culture and norms, and agents of the organization’s power over an individual (Levinson, 1964). Favorable treatment by either party should result in positive outcomes for both the employer and the employee (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). However, OST explains POS is dependent on employees' acknowledgment of the organization’s intentions behind actions perceived as favorable or unfavorable treatment (Kurtessis et al., 2015).

Social exchange theorists consider employment to be a tradeoff of labor and commitment for benefits and social rewards (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Levinson, 1965; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Social Exchange Theory created an influential framework helping organizational researchers to explain work behavior. The trade of effort and loyalty for benefits and social rewards aspect of OST evokes the social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange studies suggest support is more valued by subordinates when they are based on discretionary choice not

on circumstances beyond their employer’s control (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Also, agents of the organizations’ actions are more often viewed as indicators of the organization’s motives versus the individual’s intention (Levinson, 1965; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Additionally, POS creates a social exchange process when employees develop a responsibility to help the organization find success in its mission and expect their increased efforts to bring greater reward (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In this exchange, organizational commitment toward employees cultivates a sense of support from the organization (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Baran et al., 2011).

Kurtessis et al., (2015) states OST is mischaracterized as strictly a social exchange theory. Stating OST also plays in a self-enhancement process as POS fulfills socioemotional demands (e.g. emotional support, approval, esteem, affiliation) that increases an individual's connection to their organization (Kurtessis et al., 2015). The psychological processes underlying the consequences of POS are outlined by OST: the reciprocity norm implies POS should produces a feeling of obligation within employees to care for and help the organization reach its goals; the caring, approval, and respect suggested by POS fulfill socioemotional needs that result in strengthened relationships among employees and the organization as well as increase an individual's social status.

POS in Local News

Researchers who’ve conducted a meta-analysis on POS literature found that the type of job an individual does for the organization, and the type of organization they work for can influence how individuals seek and perceive support from their organization (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggie et al., 2009). For example, effects of POS are less appreciable for employees on the frontlines

of the organization because they are further removed from the nexus of the organization and often act as a bridge to the customer (Riggle et al., 2009). This is an important factor when looking at POS in local broadcast news workers, as support should be coming from both the corporate and local organizations. On-air field journalists are frontline workers for their respective stations and the corporate organization. This implies they are often on the fringes of their station but even further from the nexus of the corporate organization that employs the journalist as the station's ownership group. According to Riggle et al. (2009), contextual performance is the only POS outcome that is notable in frontline workers across the board. However, in industries with higher levels of emotional labor such as local news, supervisor and peer support has proven to be more effective areas of POS for employees in these fields.

News industry researchers address multiple work related issues that are consistent among local news workers in print and broadcast media throughout the years: burnout (MacDonald et al., 2016), deadline pressures and additional work responsibilities (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007), traumatic stress (Buchanan, & Keats, 2011), harassment (Parker et al., 2014), turnover (LeGore, 2009). While each of these situations can be narrowed to discuss the underlying conditions and issues, this study focuses strictly on the outcome of a combination of the multiple issues that, without support, drive experienced journalists out of the industry. Plus, how POS could be increased. Individuals intending to leave print journalism publications expressed lower rates of POS and job satisfaction and increased rates of work-family conflict, job demands, and role overload compared to journalists intending to stay (Reinardy, 2009). Reinardy (2014) names pay raise, positive feedback, pride in their work, and fulfilling

the journalistic mission as the top-ranked predecessors to job satisfaction. Likewise, local newspaper journalists connected more with the profession of journalism and not the organization (Russo, 1998). Executive personnel at Griffin Media in Oklahoma City discussed their stations’ leadership efforts to foster ethical and quality journalism practices on a daily basis as part of their initiative to retain experienced journalists (Ferguson et al., 2024). In the Reinardy (2014) research, 19% of the participants stated they planned to leave the news industry, and these participants showed significantly lower levels of job satisfaction, organizational support, autonomy, and perception of work quality, compared to the 47% who stated they did not intend to leave and the 34% who were undecided. Response alluded to insufficient pay, family issues and concerns about quality work play prominent roles for those intending to leave the industry (Reinardy, 2014). This is consistent with researchers studying turnover in the news industry (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; LeGore, 2009; Weaver et al. 2022) along with increased demands, lack of mentorship opportunities, lack of growth opportunities, and direction of the industry itself.

Changes in workflow and workload can have negative effects on journalists’ stress levels. Norms and routines in local newsrooms are important for structuring how journalists gather and disseminate news, influencing the newsroom’s culture, and providing professional standards (Hoak, 2021). The researchers examined the effects of breaking up journalists’ routines during COVID-19 shutdowns and if POS eased the high stress caused by the change (Hoak, 2021). The findings provided significant insight into the importance of supervisor and peer support in extreme situations of change and its cause of increased stress among journalists, This aligns with similar findings from

other researchers studying organizational support in journalism (Aldamman et al., 2019; Brunetto et al., 2014; Ceasens et al., 2020; Hoak, 2021). In Reinardy’s (2013) research on burnout in journalism, 81% said their jobs changed at some point during the past few years leading up to the study. This change in routine and workload can put journalists at the risk of increased stress levels. Other researchers have addressed the stress outcomes of low supervisor support for journalists compared to logistical issues that are manageable for the individual to work around (Beam & Spratt, 2009; Dworznik-Hoak, 2017; Hoak, 2021; Lund & Olsson, 2016).

Both peer and supervisor support can positively affect journalists (Hill, 2018a; Reinardy, 2013). However, the supervisors may lack the support they need to support their subordinates (Hill, 2018a; 2018b). These behaviors predict employee’s perception of organizational support and competence. Recent studies suggest subordinates can have differing social exchange relationships with supervisors and with organizations, only partly generalizing their perceived treatment from their supervisor to the entire organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kim et al., 2016).

POS Antecedentes

Fairness, supervisor support, organizational rewards, and job conditions are the three general forms of perceived favorable treatment received from the organization that, according to organizational support theory, should boost POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Ahmed and Nawaz (2015) add coworker support to the list of antecedents but mentioned career growth as impacting POS, while other researchers (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) place career growth in the job conditions and organizational rewards category. Likewise, employee characteristics also play a role

in POS. As behaviors and personalities can change how employees interpret organizational treatment, employee characteristics can, in turn, affect the treatment the individual receives (Aquino & Griffith, 1999; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Watson & Clark, 1984; Witt & Hellman, 1992). Additionally, the type of industry the organization is in can impact which antecedents are more strongly associated with POS for the workers in that field (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggall et al., 2009). Each sector has different predictors of POS, which helps researchers infer that type of organization makes a difference in determining the alignment of antecedents and POS (Ahmed, & Nawaz, 2015). In industries such as human resources with similar levels of emotional labor as local news, the supervisor and peer support POS antecedents are proven to be essential for buffering job stress (Brunetto et al., 2014; Hoak, 2021). Emotional labor, or “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display,” (p. 7) can lead to emotional exhaustion, burnout, fatigue, job-related depression, and anxiety (Gopalan et al., 2012; Hochschild, 1983).

Fairness

Fairness, or procedural justice, concerns the way in which resources are distributed to employees (Greenberg, 1990; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Repeated situations of fair or unfair decision-making concerning distribution of resources should strongly impact POS levels by suggesting a concern for employees’ welfare (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore and Shore, 1995). Factors that influence the perception of the organization’s regard to the employees include: common values shared with employees, fulfillment or breach of the work exchange obligations to employees, procedural justice, and perceived organizational politics (Kurtessis et al., 2015). The concept of perceived

organizational politics is important to perceptions of fairness. This refers to organization agents’ attempts to influence others to promote self-interest, often at the expense of other individuals and the organization (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Additionally, interactional justice, or the social aspect of procedural justice, involves the quality of interpersonal treatment in resource allocation (e.g. treating employees with dignity and respect, transparency concerning how outcomes are determined) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Fairness in Local News

There is limited research regarding the fair treatment of newsroom employees. Reinardy (2011) found that print journalists – who survived layoffs – experienced unfair treatment, along with unappreciative managers, and lack of performance feedback. Plus, unfair treatment is related to burnout in employees (Dworznik, 2008). According to the 2022 Pew Research Center study on racial and ethnic diversity in the newsroom, roughly two thirds of respondents said they thought they and their colleagues are treated fairly regardless of race and ethnicity, age, and gender (Gottfried et al., 2022).

Supervisor Support

Perceived supervisor support, or PSS, is the general views that employees develop about how much their supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being, just as they form global perceptions about their valuation by the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). Employees could interpret their supervisor's positive or negative attitude toward them as a sign of the organization's support because supervisors serve as its agents and are in the position of overseeing and evaluating their performances (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Levinson,

1965). POS resulting from PSS would increase effective organizational commitment and strengthen employees' felt obligation to help the organization reach its goals (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Maertz, Jr. et al., 2007; Rhoades et al., 2001; Shore & Shore, 1995). This could reduce voluntary turnover and other withdrawal behaviors (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

Frontline employees are further removed from reaping the benefits of some organizational support (Riggle et al., 2009), making the supervisor relationship vital for POS. Additionally, supervisor support is strongly associated with an individual's likelihood to stay at a workplace (Chenot et al., 2009). This aligns with other studies stating supervisor support is strongly correlated with turnover intentions in the workplace as their support or lack thereof can draw an employee in or push them out (Chenot et al., 2009; Dawley et al., 2008; Nissy et al., 2004). Supervisor support is especially important for young professionals during the crucial first few years of their chosen career, as such support impacts people's decisions to stay in that line of work (Chenot et al., 2009). The degree to which the employee identifies the supervisor with the organization can strengthen or weaken the relationship between PSS and POS at a specific organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Although employees' perceptions of organizational competence and support are predicted by leadership behavior, recent research suggests that employees can have unique social exchange relationships with supervisors and with organizations (Kim et al., 2016). As a result, employees only partially generalize attributions about their supervisor's behavior to the entire organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kim et al., 2016). There are mixed implications that come from supervisor support in relation to POS due to the

supervisor becoming the primary focus and a possible influencer on employees' views of support because of the relatively regular interactions that most employees have with their supervisors (Maertz, Jr. et al., 2007). Managers must work to determine whether task-based or socioemotional demands are best served through support in order to successfully increase POS (Maertz, Jr. et al., 2007; Rhoades et al., 2001). In local news, supervisor support plays a strong role in POS; however, newsroom supervisors may be lacking resources and support they need to provide necessary support to their subordinates (Hill, 2018a; 2018b).

Supervisor Support in Local News

Organizational support theory argues that employees trade-off efforts and dedication for tangible incentives (Eisenberger et al., 1986). However, organizational support research in the journalism industry suggests journalists are looking for more intangible benefits such as peer and supervisor relationships (Hoak, 2021). During Covid-19, Hoak (2021) found journalists thrive on peer and supervisor interaction, and the social distancing safety precautions proved to greatly affect workers' satisfaction. Survivor support can also cause far more stress for journalists than logistical issues when either is lacking (Beam & Spratt, 2009; Dworznik-Hoak, 2017). However, most newsrooms are not known for their supportive nature. Reporters did not share their feelings of distress to avoid showing signs of being too weak for the job (Drummond, 2004).

Journalists have a role, similar to first responders, that requires individuals to experience various levels of traumatic situations on a consistent basis. Those affected by trauma in the newsroom traditionally were not offered counseling or reduced workloads

from supervisors (Drummond, 2004). Though, now media organizations offer access to mental health services. Hill (2018a) points out a dilemma for supervisor support in situations of trauma after a local disaster strikes that can have effects on POS among subordinates.

Training in regards to trauma is one area that has been slow for leaders to incorporate into the Oklahoma City newsrooms. One reason is that the leaders have experienced little, if any, training in this area themselves. Therefore, they have no understanding of the effects that training could have in the workplace, as they do for support mechanisms, such as counseling, leadership considerations, and social support facilitation. (Hill, 2018a, p. 259)

This lack of support from the ownership company and possibly station executives affects the efficiency a supervisors can do their job and support their employees, and will in turn affect levels of POS by decreasing perceived supervisor support.

Peer Support

Like supervisor support, peer support is a strong predictor of job retention (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015). Unlike supervisor support, peer support only assists in retaining employees at that agency, not in the entire industry (Chenot et al., 2009; Nissy et al., 2004). The peer support relationship is helpful among retention of employees early in their careers. (Chenot et al., 2009). Peer support allows the ability of those with similar experiences to relate to one another and, as a result, provide more genuine

empathy and affirmation to the individual (Nissy et al., 2004). A large body of research has shown that a lack of social support from peers or the organization itself is a significant contributor to burnout and compassion fatigue (e.g., Baird & Jenkins, 2003). Organizations should foster supportive work cultures with peer and supervisor support and ensure organizational justice to provide employees with a sense of being supported (Ahmed & Newez, 2015). However, traditionally newsroom cultures lack supportive supervisors but have a close-knit environment between peers (Dworznik, 2008; Hoak, 2021; Robinson, 2011).

Peer Support in Local New

Robinson (2011) describes newsrooms as chaotic but close-knit, which is an environment in which many journalists thrive. During extraordinary news coverage, this environment facilitates teamwork to get through the high-stress situation (Lund & Olsson, 2016). However, the latest extraordinary event that affected newsrooms across the world, COVID-19, left journalists without their usual support systems due to social distancing and working from home (Hoak, 2021). Leadership can use peer support as a tool to help their team navigate traumatic situations in the workplace (Hill, 2018b; 2023). A newspaper editor pointed out how providing journalists with a meal is not only important for keeping employees going, but it increases peer connection, “around those food tables they connect with their peers, and where they share their feelings, and they talk more, so it’s really, really important” (Hill, 2018b. para. 12). Additionally, peer support is the center of Hill's (2023) Circle of Support presentation on trauma support in journalism; however, the support must come from all levels of leadership throughout the

organization including supervisor departmental, organizational corporate, and the industry.

Organizational rewards and job conditions

According to organizational support theory, favorable incentives, (e.g. promotions, salary, recognition, job security, autonomy, role stressors, and training), serve to signal a positive value of employees' contributions and hence contribute to POS (Rhoades & Eisenberege, 2002). By addressing socio-emotional demands, boosting performance-reward expectancies, and expressing the availability of assistance when needed, POS should contribute to overall employee satisfaction and commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Reward or recognition and career advancement opportunities are valued by employees and increase perceptions of organizational support (Perryer et al., 2010; Shore and Shore, 1995; Vatankhah et al., 2017). These factors are specifically related to higher levels of performance (Vatankhah et al., 2017), which is a noted consequence of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Employee engagement and retention is also positively associated with promotion, as well as salary (Perryer et al., 2010). Furthermore, individuals whose salaries and job conditions are outside of their employer's control (i.e., public school teachers) associate POS with desirable work conditions and rewards (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). However, this is not the case for these local broadcast journalists who work for multi-billion dollar corporate media conglomerates. Some even reported setting records in their 2022 fiscal reports (*Nexstar Media Group Reports, 2023; Sinclair Reports Fourth Quarter 2022, 2023*). Among

broadcast journalists, a pay increase was the top-ranked response to increase job satisfaction (Reinardy, 2014).

Job security, which is the " psychological state in which workers vary in their expectations of future job continuity within an organization" (Kramer et al., 2005, p. 390), should provide a strong indicator of POS, especially in light of the recent trends of downsizing (Allen et al., 1999; Jones, 2023; Neumann, 2023; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Wang et al., 2014). Threatened job security can negatively affect job performance, and likewise, perceptions of benefits can positively affect performance in the workplace (Kramer et al., 2005). When job security is provided, employees feel more confident investing in current and future relationships with their employer (Wang et al., 2014). The perceived control over one's own work routine is positively correlated with POS, as it indicates the organization trusts its employees to know best how to carry out their job (Eisenberger et al., 1999; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Since people tend to fall in love with their own ideas, there is great power in providing employees with a voice and choice (Geisler, 2012). Witt and Hellman (1992) add that participation in decision-making (PDM), is reflected by having a voice and a choice and it increases perceptions of organizational support. Work environments that foster employee autonomy are those where supervisors are able to consider workers' viewpoints, give them more freedom, and promote initiative (Gagne and Deci, 2005).

Role stressors – environmental demands people believe they cannot handle (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) – have a negative effect on POS when stressors are attributed to conditions controllable by the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Work overload, role ambiguity, and role conflicts are examples of unnecessary

stress on subordinates that can be mitigated by the organization through communication and training. Employees can generally understand when stress is caused by outside pressures or the inherent nature of the job, which does not affect their perceptions of support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). However, employees know when they lack proper training from their organization that contributes to any role ambiguity. According to Wayne et al. (1997), job training is a discretionary practice that indicates an investment in staff members. Geisler (2012) points out to organizational leaders that newness and change leads to “temporary incompetence,” meaning well-qualified candidates still need training for the changes they undergo when joining a new organization with differing systems and norms (p. 244).

Lastly, the size of the organization can greatly affect the level of support an individual perceives they are receiving. Individuals feel less valued in large corporations where highly defined regulations and processes may limit flexibility in dealing with individuals' specific needs (Dekker & Barling, 1995). Both small and big companies can show goodwill towards their employees; however, the formal regulations that limit flexibility to meet unique needs, decreased POS in employees (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) point out that organization size fits closely with job conditions, but could also be considered organization wide characteristics.

Organizational rewards and job conditions in local news

In the early 2010s there was a steady increase in programming between 2006 and 2011 surpassing five hours and 30 minutes a day (Reinardy, 2013). By 2023, the average on air time stations produced reached an average of six hours or more per weekday day

(Papper & Henderson, 2023c). The maximum hours of TV programming produced by stations owned and operated by the “big four” – NBC, FOX, ABC, and CBS – is 16 hours each weekday (Papper & Henderson, 2023c). Plus, broadcast news is more than simply a television newscast in this current age of technology. "Are they watching us as much?" asks Scott Blumenthal, executive vice president of LIN Media. "No. But our online numbers are up dramatically," (p. 24) serving as a multiplatform news source rather than a TV station (Reinardy 2013). Plus, local news struggles to compete with online platforms for advertising revenue which has led to local stations failing to remain fiscally stable (Ardia et al., 2020).

An interesting aspect of the broadcast news industry is the constant organizational change that workers must navigate, which can lead to stress among employees and increased need for supervisor support (Higgins-Dobney, 2018; Hoak, 2021; Reinardy, 2013). During changes, directives are passed down from management to subordinates with little room for input or negotiation (Reinardy, 2013). Additionally, far too often the change newsroom employees see is station ownership (Higgins-Dobney, 2018).

Promotions. A work promotion is typically associated with POS in a positive way, as it often comes with a pay raise, which also increases POS. However, research in local news shows promotion sometimes results in a workload raise. Reinardy (2013) found 15.7% of research participants blamed their felt burnout on a promotion they received. Promotions, along with turnover of experienced workers and additional work, are a causation of exhaustion and cynicism, but Reinardy (2013) states further research is needed to determine the exact source of the two. Additionally, promotion opportunities

can be few and far between for some broadcast journalists. Additionally, in local news a promotion is not always available and journalists respond by looking in the industry or outside of it for career opportunities. Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) noted that journalists in the 1990s were less willing to suffer relocation and unpredictable schedules for an industry with little resource and no hope for professional advancement.

Salary. Research by National Association of Colleges and Employers projected that the class of 2022 college graduates in the communications field should expect a salary of \$55,455, which is down 4.7% from the 2021 graduates' \$58,174 projected salary out of school in 2021 (Gray, 2022). However, those who enter the press side of the communication sector should expect nearly \$25,000 less for their first jobs out of college (Gray, 2022; Paper & Henderson, 2022). Even the highest paid journalists entering local TV news in 2022 received a lower wage, \$52,000, than the average entry-level communications professional, projected to make over \$55,000 (Gray, 2022; Paper & Henderson, 2022). Due to the difficulty in newsroom recruitment, organizations needed to increase starting salaries in 2023 (Paper & Henderson, 2023b). The median starting salary for all TV news positions increased from \$31,300 in 2022 to \$37,000 in 2023, yet 2023 staff salaries did not see the same jump as starting salaries (Paper & Henderson, 2022; Paper & Henderson, 2023b).

Recent RTDNA and Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey found salaries in local television news rose 4% in 2022, but inflation hit 6.4%, which led to a drop in real (after inflation) wages: down 2.4% in 2022 (Papper & Henderson, 2023b). With the prior year's 5.9% drop, the two-year cumulative loss in terms of real wages is 8.3% (Papper & Henderson, 2023b). Many researchers (e.g. Everbach & Flournoy,

2007; LeGore, 2009; Weaver et al., 2022) discuss inadequate financial compensation as a long-standing issue journalists blame for leaving the industry. Reinardy's (2014) research found, though only slightly, pay raise was the highest overall ranked answer for which would provide the most job satisfaction.

Recognition. In Reinardy's (2009) research regarding newspaper journalists work satisfaction, his findings support the Herzberg et al.'s (1959) motivation-hygiene theory, which states work satisfaction is largely reliant on intrinsic variables or motivators such as development, growth, responsibility, recognition, achievement, and the actual work itself. It is vital to give journalists the freedom to do excellent work and recognize and reward them for that work in order to create a better work environment (Reinardy (2014). This research found that 21.3% of participants found satisfaction in positive feedback from the audience and 18.3% found it in their self understanding of personal success (Reinardy, 2014). While both feedback and knowing of one's own success are recognition of some form, the researcher specifically asked about recognition from a supervisor, recognition from colleagues, and local or regional or national awards; yet, these two answers, plus pay raise and fulfillment of journalistic mission ranked higher for providing a sense of satisfaction (Reinardy, 2014).

Job Security. A larger percentage of TV newsroom employers are on contract with their stations, and most contracts also have non-compete clauses. Over 90% of on-air positions (i.e, news anchors, weathercaster, sports anchor, news reporter, multimedia journalist (MMJ), sports reporter) are under some form of contract with their station and its ownership group. Paper & Henderson (2023b) specifically shows the percentage of on air news talent with non-compete clauses within a contract: news

anchors, 86.2%; weathercaster, 85.4%; sports anchor, 86%; news reporter, 90.8%; MMJ, 86.5%; sports reporter, 90.6%.

With a contract, either party can end the employment at any time. However, if the employee is the one to terminate, they usually have to buy out their contract. A *Hollywood Reporter* article points to the liquidation damages of terminating a contract at a Sinclair Broadcast Group stations, “40 percent of employee’s then annual compensation multiplied by a percentage equal to the greater of (a) 25 percent, or (b) the percentage of the current contract year remaining after such termination” (Gardner, 2018, para 2). According to Papper & Henderson (2023d), news directors are reporting more first-year journalists paying liquidated damages to break contracts in 2022. The *Hollywood Reporter* article also discusses the issues journalists face with non-compete clauses in the contracts. A departing Sinclair employee must wait 180 days after termination to work in another nearby TV or radio station (Gardner, 2018). Though, the non-compete clause may come to an end soon, Lisa Khan, Federal Trade Commission chair, issued a statement stating in part, “Because non-compete clauses prevent workers from leaving jobs and decrease competition for workers, they lower wages for both workers who are subject to them as well as workers who are not...” (Tompkins, 2023, para. 4). The Tompkins (2023) article called the legal documents a way to force journalists – high-paid and high-profile positions and low-paid, early-level positions alike – from leaving for more money without moving away.

The constant change in station ownership leaves journalists feeling unstable (Higgins-Dobney, 2018). When station ownership changes, employees and station management navigate new systems, technology, and organizational rules and norms

(Higgins-Dobney, 2018). Plus, layoffs usually accompany new ownership trying to save money (Higgins-Dobney, 2018). Job security is a big factor in job satisfaction (Reinary, 2014; Ryan, 2009). Additionally, Hoak’s (2021) participants reported significant stress due to lack of job security during the pandemic.

Autonomy. Due in part to its less solid claims to workplace autonomy than many other professions, journalism has been referred to as a "semi-profession" (Weaver et al., 2022 p. 13). The nature of working in TV news is having to deal with constant deadlines, breaking news, social media work, and unusual hours. However, journalists working with autonomy to produce journalism they are proud of will face less stress and increased levels in job satisfaction (Reinardy, 2014). Unfortunately, the percentage of journalists reporting they have complete autonomy of the stories they tell saw a steady decline from 60% in 1971 and 1982 for three decades to 33.6% in 2013 before only slightly increasing by 2022 to 35.3% of journalists (Weaver et al., 2022). Brislin (2004) argues there is a blurred line between propaganda and journalism when working under corporate capitalistic (or other) influence, and the defining difference of the two is within the journalists’ autonomy.

Autonomy and a positive perspective on how well the organization informs the public are strong predictors of workplace satisfaction (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). Reinardy (2014) points to a study that blames “internal, organizational factors” for the decreased autonomy among journalists rather than corporate ownership or lack of resources (Reinardy, 2014, p. 3; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996, p. 118). Similarly, Weaver et al., (2022) point to a speculation by Johnstone (1976) that the large, hierarchical media organizations that journalists work in could be undermining journalists’ autonomy.

Role Stressors. The demand for content to meet the needs of broadcast and online audiences has journalists doing more with less. In Reinardy's (2014) study, 46% of participants said they were working on two or three screens, and 35% of participants said they had more responsibility for content creation or social media engagement. More journalists find themselves forced to blend the roles of a reporter, photographer, editor, and social media manager into a one-person reporting powerhouse as the number of multimedia journalists (MMJ) increased in newsrooms throughout the years (Higgins-Dobney, 2018). However, due to the current debate regarding MMJ safety – since an MMJ works solo in the field – stations saw a slight dip in MMJ numbers for 2023 (Papper & Henderson, 2023a). One 2022 incident that sparked an outcry happened when Tori Yorgey, a MMJ for WSAZ in West Virginia, was hit by a vehicle during her live shot before continuing her report with a shaky voice (TODAY, 2022). Multiple job assignments and role ambiguity are associated with higher levels of burnout in a job (Cook & Banks, 1993; MacDonald et al., 2016).

According to Papper and Henderson, (2023a) burnout has reached record highs in local news. In Reinardy (2013) 80% of participants answered either, "yes" or "I don't know" when asked if they thought they would leave broadcast journalism within five years, relating burnout to turnover intention among journalists. For broadcasters, deadline pressures, competition and technological advancements can be exhausting. When employees are required to do more (shows, social media etc.) with less (time, support, etc.), even minor increases in newsroom staff sizes become insignificant (Reinardy, 2008; 2009; 2013). A journalist wrote in the Reinardy and Bacon's (2014) survey that the moves to cut costs added a workload that had little to do with

journalism as the important role of fact checking and finding stories became more difficult.

Journalism is an emotionally taxing career, though some journalists compartmentalize the emotions, others do not. These individuals must rely on personal resources to manage emotions they face on a daily basis (Šimunjak & Menke, 2022). Viewing trauma in the journalism profession is common and the consequences can lead to burnout, secondary traumatic stress (STS), post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), compassion fatigue, and substance abuse (Buchanan & Keats, 2011; Dworznik, 2008; Feinstein et al., 2014; MacDonald et al., 2016; Weidmann et al., 2007). Broadcast journalists are often first on the scene and remain until the tragedy is resolved (Walters et al., 1989). Journalists are also community members, just like first responders, and they and their loved ones can fall victim to the events they witness daily. Additionally, journalists must work through emotional labor, which may be acting on the surface level by faking emotional expressions or acting on a deeper level by changing their cognitive process to feel the required emotion (Grandy, 2005).

Training. In this fast-paced industry, new employees are expected, with minimal training, to start work right away, but that is unrealistic, especially with advanced technology. Even experienced journalists should receive training on basic organizational structure, norms, and systems. A new workplace can render any experienced professional briefly incompetent in some aspects as they learn the new organization (Geisler, 2012). Similarly, those recruited into managerial positions are often promoted from within with little training (Pease, 1991). Research on traumatic experiences in local news points to the lack of training both journalists and managers

receive for trauma response after covering a particularly difficult story (Dworznik, 2008; Hill, 2018a). A poor manager can run off a good reporter, whether the employee makes their displeasure with management known or not, the journalist often finds work in another station or industry (Pease, 1991). It is vital for ownership companies to provide resources that foster leadership development in newsroom managers, as supervisor support is proven to play a strong role in POS within new employees (Hoak, 2021). This support allows newsroom leaders to support employees, especially in areas of high stress such as traumatic situations. Employees with less experience are vulnerable to secondary traumatic stress due to lack of training and organizational support (Baird & Jenkins, 2003; Brady et al., 1999; Dworznik, 2008).

Organization Size. When discussing the organizations that local news journalists work for, it is important to differentiate which organizational group – station or ownership company – is at the center of the discussion. The top five largest ownership companies in terms of revenue are Nexstar, Gray, TEGNA, Sinclair and Fox (Jessell, 2023). These media organizations must distribute resources to multiple stations. In Nexstar’s case, they distribute resources to 200 stations across 116 markets with 5,500 local journalists employed, which should be no issue for the company bringing in “a record \$5.2 billion in revenue” in 2022 propelling the CEO, Perry Sook, to take home the title of Dallas-Fort Worth’s highest-paid CEO of 2022 after taking an 86% pay increase with a compensation package of \$40 million (Richie, 2023, para. 4). Sook calls Nextar the “biggest company in North Texas that most people have never heard of,” (Richie, para. 6). Similarly, in Graves’s (2017) article in *The Guardian*, former Federal Communications Commission chairman, Michale Copps said,

“Sinclair’s probably the most dangerous company most people have never heard of,”
(para. 2).

Station sizes and ownership corporation sizes differ greatly in the local news industry. Research conducted by Papper and Henderson (2021) and Papper (2012) for RTDNA and Syracuse University divides information according to general market sizes, 1-25, 26-50, 51-100, 101-150, and 151+ to help provide details of how, on average, resources are distributed to stations in big and small markets. Nielsen DMA Rankings for 2023 show 210 local TV markets across the United States. However, there are multiple stations, owned and operated by different companies of varying sizes, in a single market. Papper and Henderson (2022) show station sizes by employment numbers varying from 1-10 employees to newsrooms with over 50 employees.

As Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) note, the relationship between PSS and POS at a particular business might be strengthened or weakened depending on the extent to which the employee identifies the supervisor with the company. With organizations spanning ownerships across more than 100 markets, more personalized supervisor support would have a greater impact on POS than support from the individual’s parent company (Kim et al., 2016; Riggall et al., 2009).

Employees working in the smaller markets in local news report higher levels of exhaustion than those at midrange and larger stations; however, all three groups reported high levels of exhaustion (MacDonald et al., 2016). This could be due to the distribution of resources down the chain. Similarly, all three groups reported high levels of cynicism, but those at the larger market stations had the highest levels

(MacDonald et al., 2016). The station size also affects the employment growth, Reinardy (2013) pointed to the growth usually occurring in the largest markets while small markets are stagnant. This is consistent with research a decade later, which found the top 100 markets’ staff rose modestly, but small markets mostly remained (Papper & Henderson, 2023a).

Employee Characteristics

It is crucial to keep in mind that people's personalities can affect how they perceive treatment from organizations (Aquino & Griffeth, 1999; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Watson & Clark, 1984; Witt & Hellman, 1992). An individual’s personality can also have an impact on how they behave, which can then affect how the organization treats the employee (Aquino & Griffeth, 1999; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It is vital to understand an individual's background and characteristics when looking into how they perceive a situation such as organizational support. This is especially true for an industry that is known to disrupt home life and cause cynical attitudes among workers (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; MacDonald et al., 2016; Reinrdy, 2013).

Employee Characteristics in Local News

Newsroom cultures are traditionally non-supportive and cynical, meaning journalists may feel they cannot seek support from colleagues or managers out of fear of appearing weak or unable to handle the job (Dworznik, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2016; Underwood, 2011). Drummond (2004) points out the struggle he faced as a journalism professor having to train intelligent young professionals for a future in an industry that – if it does not change its current “suck it up” approach – will cause them

to be bitter, burned out, and unhappy. Journalism is,

Perhaps the only profession outside of the military in which involvement in the war has been romanticized, and where drinking, profligate behaviors, and itinerant and unstable career paths – as well as the ‘toughness to deal with traumatizing topics of news coverage often has included events with traumatizing overtones – murder, executions, fires, military battles, bizarre birth, consequences of madness, claims of sightings of monsters and ghosts, and such. (Underwood, 2011, p. 3).

This culture often leads to reporters and photographers feeling underappreciated after covering tragedies, which increases the risk of traumatic stress for the journalist (Dworznik, 2008; Kelly, 1998). Dworznik (2008) states it is especially important to consider the contributions of organizational factors to the development of PTSD for TV news employees. POS is expected to be helpful in reducing traumatic consequences of stressors at work (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The amount of research regarding mental health in positions considered to be first responders is greater than that of journalists, although the events they find themselves at are similar and sometimes the same. Of journalists surveyed by Dubberly, Griffin, and Bal (2015) those who have not felt adversely affected by viewing traumatic content are much more likely to feel at ease expressing this with their managers compared to those who feel they have been negatively impacted by the content.

Pease (1991) reports that journalists find a commonplace in griping. One journalist in the article called journalists “professional kvetchers,” as the author points to journalists as some of the worst actors when it comes to complaints (Pease, 1991 p.

3). Additionally, researchers found low levels in each area of job satisfaction, which has similarities to POS antecedents, (the work itself, supervisors, co-workers, salary, and opportunity for promotion) is associated with increased cynicism (Jung & Kim, 2012; MacDonald et al., 2016).

POS Consequences: Turnover

POS influences multiple outcomes in organizational life: job satisfaction, employee engagement, organizational commitment, turnover intention, productivity, and performance (Ahmed, & Nawaz, 2015; Riggle et al., 2009). Riggle et al., (2009) found that individuals who perceive high levels of support from their organization are significantly less likely to leave the organization, accounting for 25% of the cited reasons for leave. Employee retention is important for organizational success, and therefore prioritizing employees’ perception of the organization’s provided or unprovided support should be on all leaderships’ minds. There is a positive correlation between reduced turnover and higher POS among workers who state they feel their supervisor appreciated their contributions and was concerned about their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 2002). This result aligns with the organizational support theory and other POS research, which maintains that positive interactions with supervisors should raise POS, which should in turn cause employees to feel more committed to the organization and less likely to leave (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Maertz, Jr. et al., 2007; Rhoades et al., 2001). Additionally, feeling obligated to stay may cause an employee to easily dismiss or have fewer turnover considerations (Maertz, Jr. et al., 2007). An individual’s felt obligation, which is an one’s developed obligation to contribute to the company in return for what company has done for the individual, from POS is also

positively related to affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Organizational commitment is understood as a stable attitude reflecting a general affective response to the company in its entirety, and is often seen as more stable and global than employee satisfaction. Thus, organizational commitment is more closely related to the achievement of long-term company objectives because of its broader implications (Perryer et al., 2010). Increased withdrawal behavior is also a correlation between POS and turnover intentions. The relationships between POS and withdrawal behaviors pointed out by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) range from small to moderate levels but both levels include turnover or turnover intentions as descriptions along with counterproductive behaviors in the workplace. In Reinardy’s (2014) broadcast journalism research, 54% of participants said their commitment to working in a TV newsroom was wavering.

Turnover in Local News

Turnover Statistics

Local TV news employment reached an all-time high of 28,000 during 2021, according to a survey by RTDNA and Syracuse University Newhouse School of Public Communications; however, 2022 numbers have dipped by 6.3% to 26,250 (Papper & Henderson, 2022). This survey represents 75.1% of local newsrooms in the United States (Papper & Henderson, 2022). Of the 1,780 nanosatellite television stations in the United States, 1,336 responded to the Papper and Henderson (2022) survey during the fourth quarter of 2021. The latest numbers for full-time local TV news employment was up 5.1% from 2022 – to 27,600 (Papper & Henderson, 2023b). The authors noted that one media company, Sinclair Broadcasting, had a regional sports production file

bankruptcy in March 2023, leading Sinclair to shut down five local news stations and cut staff from other stations. These numbers do not reflect this round of layoffs or that from the market consolidation in November 2023 (Neumann, 2023; Papper & Henderson, 2023b). The 2023 staffing numbers were similar to those from 2012 when the number of full-time TV news workers was at its second highest total in history at 27,653 (Papper, 2012).

The 2022 survey addressed staff size fluctuation – 27.7% of stations claim the staff sizes decreased, while 23.6% say there was an increase in staffing and the remaining 48.7% stayed the same or did not know the answer (Papper & Henderson, 2022). The percentage of stations citing their staff increased in the 2023 survey – which an increase was expected – to 47.7% (Papper & Henderson, 2023b). Papper and Henderson (2022) predicted what the 2023 survey could look like, they were close with the expected increase in staff size as 44.1% of stations stated they expected to expand. The predictions for the fluctuation in decreasing and consistent staff size was not accurately predicted. Paper and Henderson (2022) found 47.2% of respondents expected it to remain the same, and 2.3% of stations expected a decrease. In reality, the number of stations that saw a decrease in staffing also rose in percentage to 34.5, while the number of stations that reported their staff stayed the same plummeted 20.5 points to 17.7% this year (Papper & Henderson, 2023b). The authors point to the accuracy of the expected increase in staff sizes and state news directors are again expecting an increase, but changing economic conditions can affect that for the next year (Papper & Henderson, 2023b). As for new and replacement hires, on-air talent positions remain high on the list for vacancies (Papper & Henderson, 2022). The average television

station hired 7.4 replacements and 1.4 new hires (Papper & Henderson, 2022).

Multimedia journalists made up for 20 % of new hires and 23% of replacement hires, while 12% of replacement hires and 5% of new hires were for anchor and reporter/anchor positions, and reporter positions accounted for 5% of new hires and 9% of replacement hires (Papper & Henderson, 2022). The producer hires also remained high in the ranks for positions with most new and replacement hires (Papper & Henderson, 2022).

Turnover Literature

In 2022, news directors struggled to retain and hire quality journalists, one news director recalled job postings being open for months before receiving one application (Papper & Henderson, 2023d). Paper and Henderson (2023d) quoted another news director referring to the current state of local news, “more employees are leaving the business than we’ve seen before” (p. 141). LeGore (2009) addressed the frequent high turnover rate in television news, but believes that little attention has been devoted to journalists quitting television news entirely rather than relocating to a larger market. Journalists who leave the print and broadcast news industries do so for a variety of reasons, including a lack of opportunities, inadequate pay, family responsibilities, rising demands on limited resources, a lack of mentorship opportunities, and discouragement with the direction of their work or the industry (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; LeGore, 2009; Weaver et al. 2022). Stress levels and newsroom schedules were cited by news directors for cause of turnover in 2022 (Papper & Henderson, 2023d). Reinardy’s (2014) research consisted of qualitative data from journalists stating factors that would make them leave within the next five years. Responses were consistent with researchers’

findings. “MORE MONEY, LESS STRESS;” “More work and less pay? Hmmmmm.,” “Increasing workload, decreasing pay. Long, odd hours. This is NOT a family-friendly business,” (Reinardy, 2014 p. 10). Lack of decent management, inflexible supervisors and corporate executives, mismanagement of human resources, changes in goals and perceptions, double standards due to race, gender inequality, general stress, working conditions, salaries, and lack of career development were issues brought up by print journalists (Pease, 1991).

Women are more likely than men to leave journalism (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Legore, 2009; Weaver et al. 2022). Legore (2009) and Everbach and Flournoy (2007) address work-life balance and family concerns being the major issues that cause women to leave the industry. The 2022 American Journalist Study, by Weaver et al. (2022), has women with zero to four years of experience outnumbering men, 60.8% to 39.2%. Men and women with 10 to 14 years of experience have nearly equal percent representation among genders with 50.7% male journalists and 49.3% female journalists (Weaver et al., 2022). However, the numbers continue to switch from there, 68.9% of journalists with 20+ years of experience are men, while 31.1% are women (Weaver et al., 2022). Although women typically leave the field sooner, male journalists are nonetheless quitting the field with their newsroom counterparts (Legore, 2009).

Research Questions

Experienced news workers are considered a key component of improved news content quality (Daniels & Hollifield, 2002). It is important to learn what journalists say would prolong their stay in the TV news industry to provide a base for journalists'

needs newsrooms can meet to keep experienced and skilled employees happy, thriving, and producing. Therefore, this study focuses on four main issues. First, what are experiences of perceived support from station leadership and supervisors that journalists face? Plus, how do journalists perceive support provided by corporate ownership companies? These research questions will also allow the researcher to compare turnover intentions with levels expressed POS among participants. Lastly, the researchers asked what changes journalists think newsrooms could make to retain experienced journalists in the TV news industry (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Research Question 1: What is broadcast journalists’ current experience of POS from local stations?

Research Question 2: What is broadcast journalists’ current experience of POS from their respective ownership companies?

Research Question 3: How do journalists’ turnover intentions in their station and in the industry compare to their expressed POS from local stations and their respective ownership companies?

Research Question 4: What do journalists say should change about the industry to keep experienced journalists like themselves?

Method

Participants

There are 12 participants represented in this study: five were former broadcast journalists while seven were still in the industry at the time of this research. Study participants worked in the local news industry between 2018-2023, which allowed them to provide an accurate account of current local news experiences. Each participant must

be an employee who worked on air and in the field, (e.g. reporters, MMJ, anchor/reporter), as this narrows the research to understand the level of support received in similar local news positions. As this study looks into the turnover consequence of POS, former reporters (FR) could provide details from the point of view of already leaving the industry. Current reporters (CR) provide the point of view of individuals facing contract deadlines and the decision to stay or go. FR1 worked in multiple TV and radio markets as a general assignments reporter, lifestyle anchor, and feature reporter for nearly 18 years, seven of those years were at their mid-size station bought by Nexstar during their employment. CR1 also worked in a Nexstar station, the anchor/reporter with 7-10 years of experience started in a small market and moved up the market ranks through the parent company. FR2, CR2, and CR5 all work for Sinclair-owned stations. FR2 started in a mid-size market straight out of college and worked their way up at the single station. CR2 was in the first year at their second Sinclair station, which they transferred to after one year at a small market newsroom. The ability to transfer kept CR2 in the industry, “I don’t know if I would’ve been able to stand that second year.” Lastly, CR5 worked in three different markets, four newsrooms, and in multiple positions on and off camera. The station in market 51-75 is the second station CR5 reported at. The last participant to work for a media conglomerate owning stations in over 100 markets is FR3. The former Gray Television employee went into a station in the 26-50 market range straight out of college hoping to change the world one story at a time, but left the industry before signing another contract. CR3 and FR5 worked for medium size conglomerates Hearst and Tegna. The Tegna station in market range 51-75 was FR5’s second station. CR3 joined the mid-size Hearst station after graduation and

was on their first contract. FR4, CR4, and CR6 worked for small locally owned corporations. FR4 jumped from one small corporate station in a small market to a Bahakel station in the 51-75 market range for their second station. Unfortunately, the pandemic proved to cause strain on the smaller market station and its employees. CR4’s ownership group, Tyler Media, owns TV and radio stations in mid and small markets. The low-budget station had to hire individuals still finishing their degrees, like CR4. This is a practice FR5 noticed at their former stations in markets over 100. CR6 received an offer to anchor at a small station straight out of school but does not plan to stay since they have never lived anywhere longer than four years. Lastly, CR7 found a comfortable spot at their third station, which is owned and operated by FOX in a mid-sized market. The reporter with five years of experience stated they are tired of moving and market jumping and, therefore will likely re-sign.

Participant details are provided in the table:

Table 1

Participants’ work background information.

Participant	Company	Market Size	Experience (Years)	Position	Data Set (Year)
Former Reporter 1 (FR1)	Nexstar	26-50	16-20	Anchor/Reporter	1 (2022)
Former Reporter 2 (FR2)	Sinclair	26-50	3-6	Anchor/Reporter	1 (2022)
Former Reporter 3 (FR3)	Grey	26-50	0-2	Reporter	2 (2023)
Former Reporter 4 (FR4)	Bahakel	51-75	3-6	MMJ/Reporter	2 (2023)
Former Reporter 5 (FR5)	Tegna	51-75	3-6	MMJ/Producer	2 (2023)

Current Reporter 1 (CR1)	Nexstar	26-50	7-10	Anchor/Reporter	1 (2022)
Current Reporter 2 (CR2)	Sinclair	26-50	0-2	MMJ	1 (2022)
Current Reporter 3 (CR3)	Hurst	26-50	0-2	MMJ	1 (2022)
Current Reporter 4 (CR4)	Tyler Media	26-50	0-2	Anchor/Reporter	1 (2022)
Current Reporter 5 (CR5)	Sinclair	51-75	3-6	Anchor/MMJ	2 (2023)
Current Reporter 6 (CR6)	Hubbard	101-125	0-2	Anchor/Reporter	2 (2023)
Current Reporter 7 (CR7)	FOX	26-50	3-6	Reporter	2 (2023)

Note. The table provides additional information regarding the interview process by recording the data set the participants belong to.

Data Collection

Six participants from Data Set 1 – interviewed between October and November 2022 – and six participants from Data Set 2 – interviewed between October and November 2023 – make up the 12 former and current journalists. Data Set 1 was part of a pilot study conducted in 2022 and consisted of four current and two former broadcast journalists. Data Set 2 added three former and three current journalists. In total five former and seven current broadcast journalists participated in this study. All participant and station identifiers were omitted to allow participants the freedom to express their opinions comfortably. The Data Set 1 interviews were conducted in October 2022 via video calls. The video calls result in the use of electronic recording as a data collection technique (Yin, 2016). The videos were deleted and audio tracks were saved to an

external hard drive. The audio was then transcribed using a transcription service, Transcriptive. Data Set 2 was collected in October and November of 2023 via video calls. The researcher used Adobe Premiere Pro transcribing tool to transcribe the audio track from the video call and deleted the video chat. These audio recordings and transcripts were exported to an external hard drive kept in the researcher's home office and the other copy to a separate flash drive for backup. The original Zoom file with a visual of the participant will be deleted. Audio transcription services like Transcriptive and Premiere Pro's tool can misinterpret words, most often when participants use industry terminology. In cases where industry terms were misspelled, the researcher could easily correct the transcript; however, the researcher also stored the audio file to access if there were any questions about the participants' intended statements.

As the pilot study was conducted one year before the current study, it is important to address differences in Data Set 1 and Data Set 2 interviews. Three questions were added to the questionnaire between Data Set 1 and 2, the first set of interviews does not ask participants specifically about the individual's characteristics or peer support experiences.

This qualitative study is based on POS and its antecedents (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Rhoades and Eiasenberger, 2002). With the intent to allow participants to express their experience in an in-depth format, the researcher created a semi-structured interview questionnaire based on the researcher's analysis of POS findings (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Rhoades and Eiasenberger, 2002), similar to how (Scanlan et al., 2018) developed questions for a qualitative analysis from reviewing literature. The use of semi-structured interviews “allow(s) the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters”

(DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006 p. 315). The researcher used POS meta-analysis research to construct questions specific to understand journalists’ experience in areas of POS antecedents: fairness, supervisor support, peer support, and organizational rewards and job conditions (i.e. pay, recognition, promotion, job security, role stressors, autonomy, organization size, and training) (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015; Rhoades and Eiasenberger, 2002). The researcher also used research pertaining to journalist’s mental responses to the stories they cover to shape questions regarding the participant’s characteristics (MacDonald et al., 2016). Lastly, the three additional questions provide journalists with the opportunity to voice their ideas of change, while this information in itself is important as it comes from those at the nexus of this study. It also provides the researcher with common industry fixes that journalists agree are necessary across the board.

The official questionnaire used for data set 2 is provided:

Table 2

(When interviewing a former journalist, the researcher used past tense language when asking interview questions.) Background Have you ever questioned your choice of a career in TV news? What are two positives about working in local t.v. news? The organizational support system <i>Employee Characteristic</i> *Why did you get into the industry? *How has your career choice and job affected your personality?
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Fairness

Tell me about a time, if any, you were treated unfairly or witnessed others treated unfairly within or by the organization.

Supervisor Support

Do you think your supervisors do what they can to assist you when you need help?

Have you ever witnessed a supervisor speaking poorly of you or a colleague openly? If so, describe it.

Peer Support

*What type of peer support programs or mentoring, if any, does your station provide?

Organizational Rewards and Job Conditions

Pay, Recognition, and Promotion

Describe your daily tasks. Do you think you are adequately compensated for the work you do on a daily basis? Explain.

Do you receive appreciation or recognition from your supervisors, station, or company that made you feel like your work is important? Explain.

Describe the career growth opportunities you see within your organization.

Job Security

Does having a contract make you feel secure in your job?

Autonomy

Would you say you have autonomy in your job (i.e. what stories you tell, how it is gathered and told)?

Role Stressors

What resources are provided to ease stress from the role responsibilities such deadlines, breaking news, and possibly traumatic or heavy subject matter?

Training

What programs, if any, does your company offer to train new employees on company standards and operations?

Organization Size

How does the size of your company contribute to the level of support you receive from supervisors?

How does the size of your company contribute to the level of support you receive from the company?

Additional Questions

What is one change your newsroom could make that would help you accomplish your daily goal? Elaborate on how that change would assist in your position.

What are the top three things you think your news station needs to change to retain experienced journalists?

What are the top three changes you think your station's parent company could make that would result in more journalists staying in local TV news.

Note. Questions with the asterisk (*) next to it are questions added in data set 2 interviews.

Data Analysis

The researcher used inductive narrative analysis to allow “the data to speak for itself, without the influence of any preconceived notions”(Al-Saraf, 2023, para.3), regarding journalists’ experiences within areas of POS outlined by POS antecedents (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015, Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Narrative analysis provides a window into the human process of making meanings of situations and “how individuals position themselves in their worlds and make sense of themselves through stories” (Josselson & Hammack, 2021).

This analysis allows for the findings to be derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher and the multiple readings and interpretations of the raw interview data (Thomas, 2003). Cole (2021) used an exploratory qualitative approach to explore the POS experiences of African-American women in employee resources groups (ERGs). Cole’s study, which also seeks to understand employees' POS experiences, uses an exploratory qualitative research approach. Cole (2021) stated the narrative analysis was a method considered for the research but ultimately did not align with their researcher’s goals as closely as exploratory research. Specifically, the research wanted the stories of POS to be told without the deeper conversation expanding on the participant’s understanding of the experience (Cole, 2021). This researcher did want the participants, particularly those who had left the industry, to expand on their understanding of their POS experiences to connect their experiences to others, the industry, standards, company, and journalistic integrity to the turnover. The researcher allowed for additional questioning to understand situations deeper within the semi-structured questionnaire. The narrative qualitative analysis allows for the nuances and complexities of the journalists'

experiences of support in the workplace that would be missed in a survey used in quantitative POS research (Al-Saraf, 2023). In this analysis, categories are developed from the interpretation of the raw data to capture themes noted by the researcher that are of the control of either company or station leadership (Thomas, 2003). During the coding process, the researcher first gathered quotes according to the POS antecedents the interviewees discussed. The data was then color coded according to similar situations within the area of POS. The researcher rearranged the data according to the entity – station or corporate – that controls the support discussed by the participants. The results of this study address the areas of POS that both the station and the corporate should focus on. Plus, it points to additional support issues that are important to journalists but are unrelated to POS according to previous research (Ahmed & Nawaz, 2015, Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), but consistent with research on the journalist’s connection to the profession (Russo, 1998). To compare participants’ experiences and turnover intention, the researcher created a chart that shows the POS antecedents color coded according to the negative or positive experience the interviewee brought up and their attitude towards the situation. Though there are multiple ways to address the trustworthiness of the study results, these findings are compared to previous research findings and participants are allowed to provide feedback (Thomas, 2003).

Personal Disclosure

The researcher worked in local TV news for five years at two stations in Oklahoma City – one commercial and the other public television – in the roles of a writer, assignment editor, newscast director, technician, and MMJ. This allows the researcher to understand and interpret industry language easily. It also provided the researcher with

access to study participants, 10 participants were recruited directly by the researcher via social media messaging, seven of these were prior acquaintances of the researcher as former colleagues or classmates, and the last two were recruited through a participant reaching out to colleagues. However, working in the industry prior to the study can cause the researcher to have preconceived biases regarding the topic. It is vital to let the narrative material speak for itself without any preconceived notions of the researcher. While the researcher coded the data for themes and patterns, it was important to use constant comparison, rival thinking, and looking for negative instances to better explain experiences among the 12 participants (Yin, 2016).

Results

The researcher categorized the data according to the research questions’ topics, (i.e. POS as station’s employees, POS as ownership company’s employees, turnover intention, and changes journalists wish to see implemented at station and corporate levels). POS experiences in local news consist of experiences that are controllable by the station leadership: supervisor support, peer support, and instances of journalistic integrity. Journalists’ experiences with POS from ownership are categorized according to areas controllable by the corporate leadership: disconnect, labor contracts, and journalistic integrity. The third section compares participant’s POS experiences with turnover intention. Finally, the last research question is answered with journalists’ answers to industry fixes that would retain experienced journalists like themselves.

What is broadcast journalists’ current experience of POS from local stations?

Research participants have vastly different experiences with POS within their respective stations. Though, their experiences provide an outline of areas station

leadership can focus on to boost POS at the local level. According to former and current reporters, experiences with supervisors, peers, and their role as journalists providing trustworthy information is of great importance.

Supervisor Support

Executive Leadership. Journalists’ experiences with executive leadership differ greatly. Some experienced supportive feedback sessions and felt comfortable approaching their news directors regarding any issues they had. “If I make mistakes, like, they're gonna call me out for it,” CR3 said. “But, I also feel like if I'm having a bad week, I can literally go to my news director and just talk to her about it,” CR3 explained. CR6 thinks support they received from the news director is an effort to get talent to re-sign a contract with the station and company rather than specifically to help the individual grow. Though, CR2 stated, “I do like getting that feedback.” CR2 also stated they receive support and respect from their news director for the progress they’ve made in their early career as a journalist. CR2 stated, “I feel like having a male news director who respects you for your work and appreciates your talent instead of making you uncomfortable or I don't know, puts you in different situations, is very important.”

Others described having toxic individuals at the helm of their newsroom. FR3’s station went through an ownership transition during their employment and top station leadership personnel were replaced. The young journalist was disturbed by their news director forcefully adjusting FR3's attire in the breakroom during a work social event. “But make sure you show your feet when you're on set. Make sure you point your toes, show your feet, and actually oversexualize you on TV,” FR3 continued mocking the former boss. CR7 also had a rough experience with a news director but got out of the

station and found a new place where they are respected. Though the journey to stay in the industry was not easy, “I got an agent because I was so desperate because, like, nothing was working.” CR7 continued, “That agent actually told me that [the former news director] was talking shit about me to other news directors.” CR1 talked about wishing the station had an anonymous suggestion box because unlike CR3, they did not feel comfortable going to the news director at all.

Journalists recognize the stress executive management is under from working with the corporate organization. “[News director] needed help. I think she needs a lot more help,” said FR1. Meanwhile, FR4 barely interacted with the station news director, “I never really referred to her as such because she never really was around.” Instead, the assistant news director worked closely with the station employees in day-to-day operations. Interestingly, FR1’s – who worked in the market range 26-50 – news director did not have an assistant news director, and FR4’s – a market 51-75 journalist – news director did have an assistant. While both executives were perceived as being too busy to focus on employees, the stations are owned by two separate companies of vastly different sizes.

Middle Management. One commonality between journalists' perceived supervisor support is the inconsistencies between support received by differing managers. “Some supervisors are more useful than other supervisors,” CR5 stated. According to Pease (1991) and Hill (2018) middle managers often have little training upon beginning their role as managers to better support their employees, which shows in the inconsistencies reported. Like with news directors, participants recognized the additional

stress middle managers carry that affects the support they receive from that manager. FR3 had a supportive executive producer (EP) upon arrival at the market 26-50 station.

I really appreciated that, especially starting out when I was trying to gain confidence, all this stuff. But I feel like when the new management came in and my new news director came in, that all kind of changed because she was starting to yell a lot at my EP. So, my EP started taking it out on all of us reporters. (FR3)

Most journalists could tell the story of a middle manager providing needed assistance consistently. Yet, few did tell stories of their encounters with supervisors that are much less helpful. Managers at FR3’s stations developed inappropriate nicknames for producers working under them. One producer at FR3’s station found out how managers referred to her as “hopeless” and another producer as “airhead,” it should be noted that the male producers received different, yet still inappropriate, nicknames – “playboy” being one. Meanwhile, FR5’s assistant news director – who joined the station after FR5 was already employed – was the tipping point for the MMJ, “he’s a major reason that a lot of people keep leaving.” CR1’s story of toxic management happened in the editorial meeting, “there might have been 20 people in there. And so [news director] made the joke, everyone knew who she was talking about and there were laughs.” The butt of the joke was a former reporter, this researcher caught up with them after they found a better situation for themselves. “Just because even in my performance evaluations, like, I’m the same person as I was back then,” however the treatment is completely different for CR7. “But here and there, I’ll get a ‘good job’, which is more than I ever got [last station],” said CR7.

Fairness. Journalists discussed situations of fairness in interactions with supervisors, procedural actions of supervisors, and dissimilar treatment between supervisors and various peers. Some situations have journalists questioning if their boss’s actions are legal. “On Monday, they took me off the air, and then I basically became a glorified [associate producer] AP,” FR3 explained, “they listed my job up on Indeed, and like, LinkedIn that Friday.” CR4 told a story of the station’s meteorologist missing out on overtime pay for hours of severe weather coverage work.

She was on their contract for 40 hours and sometimes she would stay, work her regular hours and she would stay for severe weather and she was never compensated for two years doing that. Never compensated for any severe weather. Never. (CR4)

FR1, FR2, FR5, and FR3 – whose experience is documented in the previous section – all reported instances of male employees being favored by management. FR1 and FR5 found it difficult to move up to anchoring due to a newer male reporter being favored for the position. FR1 was specifically told the job was to be filled by a man when it opened. It is worth noting some journalists acknowledge that peers sometimes get opportunities over them, but it is well earned. “I feel like they work hard for it so I wouldn’t be mad about it,” CR2 said about some employees being prioritized. However, not everyone feels being passed by peers is done so fairly. CR7 recalled being left on the weekend reporter schedule – usually set for new reporters at the station – throughout their two-year contract while new reporters moved up at the station. “I always thought that was unfair personally,” CR7 stated. Lastly, FR2 stated they would get to work early, go over

scripts, and go the extra mile. Yet, their male co-host was loved by management and FR2 would take the brunt of the critiques for their shared show.

As with CR2, other participants understand there are more sides or details to decisions made in the newsroom. CR6’s co-worker was recommended a two-week break by a therapist, but the station split the PTO into two one-week breaks. CR6 argued, “I wouldn’t necessarily call that unfair in that managerial position because like, I mean, they have an obligation too.” Both CR5 and CR3 saw a difference in leniency on mistakes by some reporters but not others. “I’ve definitely noticed that there are some people who aren’t maybe given more grace in places where others might not be given that grace,” CR3 stated. Likewise, CR5 said, “errors that some reporters could get away with were little mess ups [that other] reporters could not get away with at all. It was just World War III.” As for practices some reporters can get away with and others cannot, CR1 explained a situation a peer went through that was deemed the “most unfair thing” CR1 has seen at their station. “One of the strategies of past weekend reporters was to shoot interviews ahead of time during the week to hold until the weekend. But our current weekend reporter was brought into management’s office to say that they wanted to stop pre-shooting stories in the week because maybe by the time the weekend comes, the news isn’t as pressing,” said CR1. They added that the weekend reporter already works on two more reports per week compared to every other reporter at the station – this is without the additional compensation and with less support than previous weekend reporters.

Employee Investment. As touched on in the executive leadership and middle management sections, journalists occasionally received feedback from management personnel. These sessions discussed by FR2, CR2, CR3, CR4, and CR6 allow the

journalists to grow their skills. Yet, that is not the experience all journalists have in their newsrooms.

I feel like as managers, you should be working to uplift your entire team and make your entire team better, not just going, oh, well, we're going to let these people over here fall by the wayside because they aren't performing how we want them to perform. (CR5)

While CR5 discussed managers letting people fall to the wayside, many – even those with feedback sessions – describe not receiving formal training at their stations. “It's not really official training or anything like that. It's more of just you shadowing a lot. Yeah. And if you don't pick it up, you're just S.O.L.,” CR6 said. While CR7 is more experienced, the station did not provide training. “I don't think I needed it. I don't think they thought I needed it either,” CR7 explained. CR5 did say the station they work for had a training plan until they realized, “I wasn't just the run-of-the-mill new guy,” but added, “I still have to learn all of you guys’ software.”

FR2 talked about feeling embarrassed after being sent out for a live shot with zero training, “I've got an actual child on my hip, my mic in one hand and I go, ‘Yeah we're hanging out at burgers babies back to you.’ They were expecting, like, a two-minute, two-and-a-half-minute hit and it was one of the most embarrassing things of my life.” Similarly, FR4 was expected to hit the ground running as a news reporter, “You know, how like you have that little buffer period where it's like you do a couple practice stories and then you go on the air like literally it was like day one.” FR1 at least had one day at their new job before turning a story, “It took me a week and a half of reporting and [producer] came up to me so mad at me saying ‘Why aren't you sending us your stories

before they go to air?’ I didn’t know I was supposed to send it. And she was so mad at me, nobody trained me.” CR4’s station hires college students, but there is not any formal training to help the young employees.

Half of the participants stated they received some sort of training. Although, FR5’s training was for their role as a producer not for their MMJ position. CR1, CR2, and CR6 received peer training. FR3 was in the middle of peer training when a snowstorm broke out and the station asked if they could go live. Unfortunately for FR3, they started at their station during COVID-19 and did not receive formal training or even equipment – such as a laptop, “I’m sending everything script via email and I’m watching videos on my phone.” Lastly, CR3’s station provides new employees with two weeks of working with peers and getting comfortable with the equipment their position uses.

Peer Support

Building Relationships. “I think the friendships you make along the way are really great and they really keep you moving forward throughout all the phases of life that you’re going through,” FR3 said. Notably, peer support is the one area of POS that FR3 spoke extensively and positively about. For FR5, it kept them at the station longer, “if it wasn’t for my coworkers, I probably would have left a lot sooner.” FR4 said, “It was a little more, that was just kind of organic at the first station.” However, the age gap between FR4 and other employees at the second station led to a more difficult time for FR4 to develop those relationships. As FR4 experienced at their second station, peer relationships may be harder to develop than others. FR1 worked hard to develop relationships with the producers, “I learned how to navigate them and adapt to that

environment, you know, and become friends with them. But it was very difficult, you know.”

CR2, CR3, and CR4 explained their peer relationships may be friendly, but they hold each other accountable in their roles as journalists. “Whenever it comes down to a mistake or something, we still call each other out,” CR4 stated. CR2 referred to these coworkers as family, “I feel like someone would come to their defense right away.” CR3 is close in age with many other reporters and explained support in the form of mentorship is from more experienced coworkers. “I just mean like the anchors are kind of where I would be getting that mentorship from and a lot of them do a great job of helping out. Once I even had one of them reach out to me towards the beginning of my time here,” said CR3.

Fairness. FR1’s station noticeably held more tension between coworkers, “It was ‘producers can do no wrong, and anchors, reporters, and photogs you do what they say’ like it was very much, but they’re not your supervisor. But it felt like they were, and there’s a disconnect in what they think you’re doing versus what you are doing out in the field.” However, the tension is due to unfair treatment from both supervisors and peers rather than individual relationships. Some situations of inconsistent treatment of employees are discussed in the fairness section under supervisor support. However, some participants, such as CR6, witnessed the unfair treatment between peers, “It’s more coworker and coworker. I wouldn’t necessarily say my managers are unfair.” CR4 also experienced coworkers being more supportive of certain peers, “Our assignment editor back in the day would give stories to, to a reporter instead of like, like helping, helping me. And so I feel like that’s, that’s happened.”

Journalistic integrity

Ethics. The researcher did not specifically ask participants about ethics at their station or parent company, but the topic was addressed by participants during various conversions within the semi-structured interviews. Each participant has a unique perspective of their role as a journalist, which is often guided by the industry ethics they learn in journalism school or various experiences. The station leadership also has their viewpoint on journalistic integrity on the content produced at the station. The study will discuss the corporations and their perceived ethical practices in the journalists' POS experiences working for the ownership company section.

Journalists want to work where they feel their morals are aligned with their employer's actions in this area. “We have some of the best bosses in the business, they care about ethics,” said CR3, “that was important to me coming in. They are always supportive and they challenge you to be better all the time.” At first, FR5 found alignment at their station, “that is until my assistant news director got hired.” The new boss wanted FR5 to cover a story about a wedding venue that FR5 had already booked and paid off for their own wedding. “I told him three times I couldn't do the story and he didn't understand why,” FR5 added. When asked about leaving the industry, FR3 discussed ethics, “every station is trying to be number one. And I think it's definitely ratings-focused instead of journalism and the ethics behind journalism.” Meaning, FR3 wanted to tell important things that the community needs to know, not what the corporate executives thought the community wanted to watch.

Autonomy. Lack of autonomy is associated with negative POS experience, increased stress, and decreased job satisfaction (Reinardy, 2014; Rhoades and

Eisenberger, 2002). Weaver (2022) explained journalism’s claim to workplace autonomy is less solid compared to other professions. With some consistency to Weaver’s research, participants discussed having little, partial, and near full autonomy at their stations. “I get to pitch the stories that are interesting to me. What I can find,” CR3 explained, but ultimately the news director, assistant news director, and assignment editor make the final decisions. Likewise, “I have autonomy with how I tell my story. What I don’t have autonomy with, is what kinds of stories we do,” CR5 said. FR1 and CR1 both stated they had autonomy once getting their story, but ran into issues either pitching stories or approving scripts with leadership and editorial peers. “Reporters have to spend hours before their shift looking for stories. And so even when you find good stories, it’s not always accepted by them because their opinion’s different or they’ll be inconsistent,” said CR1 about pitching stories to leadership and producers. FR1 detailed a frustrating process of getting their script approved by their producers.

They read the story and they’re like, I thought we were gonna talk about the fact that you know, this legislator did this and blah blah blah. I’m like, but that didn’t really happen and they get mad at you. (FR1)

Meanwhile, CR7 compared their autonomy at two stations, “It’s hands off here,” at their current station, “I would compare that to [former station], you would have had a battle at [former station] to tell your story.” CR7 continued to provide an example of the so-called “battle” of sending a script to producers only to have it completely rewritten – taking up the time to edit – which led to CR7 getting in trouble for not finishing the story by the news director’s deadline of 10 minutes before the newscast. In another situation of a reporter having little to no autonomy, FR3 found themselves in the boss’s office after

following a breaking news situation that they witnessed live. “This is why I love news. Like, I love breaking news. Like, I’m such a sucker for it,” FR3 stated. Newsroom leadership was upset that the reporter followed the breaking news incident rather than going to a preview for an upcoming community event. FR3 said, “I was just like, damn, I went home, I cried.” Other participants FR2, FR4, FR5, CR4, and CR6 felt they had more consistent opportunities for autonomy in their roles. “There was a lot of autonomy and when it came to what I did for feature reporting, I never had to get it approved. They just wanted me somewhere. So it was just like whatever,” said FR2. Similarly, FR4’s station was just happy to have the content, “You kind of just, like, rolled up with whatever you saw and you just kind of rolled with whatever you can actually pull off.”

CR2 said they are trusted by management and producers to know what is important at the state capitol as the station’s political reporter, “So like, I’m not gonna tell you what story you have to do when you’re the one that’s inside the rotunda right now.” FR5 was grateful to have autonomy while telling stories, However, because I wanted to do features, they weren’t always prioritized by management.” CR4 feels their news director is clear that their job is to do what they collectively feel is best for the community they cover and the journalists are autonomous with how they do the coverage within that scope. Likewise, CR6 also thinks their voice is heard with content but understands not all opinions are actualized.

What is broadcast journalists’ current experience of POS from their respective ownership companies?

Research participants view their employers differently between each individual. Some participants see the corporation as their employer and others see the station as

their employer. No matter how the participant viewed their employer, their connection to the corporate is limited. Even though these participants are on the fringes of their corporate organization, the company does have control over multiple areas of POS that are important for supporting local journalists in their day-to-day and overall career.

Disconnect

Multiple reporters noted their parent companies were disconnected from their needs and their everyday realities and that can be seen through content and financial decisions. CR2 received a chance to take part in employee programs through the corporate company allowing them to speak one-on-one with executive leadership. CR2 said, “I feel like that's been kind of nice, just like telling him our day-to-day. Cause it's like, I mean you don't understand us, You have no concept. It is so out of touch with what they expect and what they see is going on.” CR5 works for the same parent company as FR2 and CR2, they do not see any support from the executive level. CR5 explained, “You have your news director, you have your general manager, and I feel like everybody above them just doesn't care, doesn't even view us as human beings.” FR2 says corporate managers would visit newsroom leadership but never spoke to the employees, “they don't understand our day to day at all.”

CR6's corporate executives did allow employees to ask questions during a visit once, but it did not leave the anchor/reporter hopeful for the future. “Our head of sales was like, ‘What areas of growth do you see? Like our station, our market.’ And he flat out said he goes, ‘Oh, um, not a lot.’ And I'm like, Oh, okay, cool,” CR6 said. The anchor reporter stated the understanding, “bigger profit margins get bigger resources and stuff like that,” but continues to advocate for small market journalists who need that support

too. CR1 predicted the connection to the parent company may depend on the market size of the station, “I just think that the lower in the company you are the market wise, the less they care about you and treat them well.” CR4’s station is a small localized media company, but the size does not change the company's association with its news station. “I don't think they even know what's going on.” CR4 continued, “I really don't think they care.” Actually this was also the consensus from other participants who mentioned their time working for small family-owned corporations. CR7’s first station was owned by a “tiny” company – it owns stations in only two markets, and CR7 said, “I don't think they really cared what we did.”

FR1 points to the company cutting costs by cutting the news director’s support staff, “I do feel like [news director's] pulled in a million different directions so it's not a dig at her at all. It's a dig at how [ownership] has it set up.” FR1 continued, “It's all about finances. They don't wanna pay for an assistant news director.” CR4 also pointed to financial limits causing obstacles for station leadership, “If the owners are telling you like, ‘Hey, you know what? I feel like you can reduce costs on that and if you don't want to comply then we'll find somebody else.’ I think there's an issue.” Supervisor support at the station is important for participants, but the support can be largely dictated by the parent company. FR3’s station was bought by Gray Television, “Because of the company change and because of the new news director that came in and then we've had, I think over 35 people leave since January, both on air and off air.” FR3 continued to explain they knew little to nothing about the company they worked for after the buyout, “I don't even know how to use our health insurance or dental insurance.”

Labor Contract

The contracts between the participant and their company were not perceived as job security, but instead as an entrapment that allowed the employee to obtain a larger workload, a change in daily or weekly obligation for extended periods, or even slight promotions without increased financial compensation or increase in benefits. It does not allow the employee to leave their position without buying out of the contract with the company, yet the company can terminate the contract at any time. Entrapment feelings occur when employees have to remain with an organization due to the high costs of leaving (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The contracts also do not allow on-air talent to gain career growth by jumping from stations in the market. “They wanna fire you or give you promotions without pay. They can make you do as duties required. Like there's so much in there that is just like, not good for me at all, but only good for the station,” FR2 explained. FR1 addressed the same issues with contracts.

You don't feel secure in your industry because if you were to go to another station in your hometown that's a competitor, then you could be sued. You know, that doesn't make you feel safe. It makes you feel terrified. (FR1)

FR4, who did not work under contract with their station, found comfort in knowing that if they were unhappy, they could leave. The participants expressed that it felt more like the company wanted you to want to be there by trusting you to remain loyal without the contract.

Pay. Inadequate financial compensation is a reason many journalists state either caused them to leave the industry or has them pondering the thought (Legore, 2009; Pease, 1991; Reinardy 2014). Many journalists complain their contracts lock their

salaries, which CR6 pointed out provides some sort of solace knowing it will not decrease. However, pay also does not increase when the workload grows when their contract states, “duties as assigned.” CR2’s schedule changed for months to fill a vacant position, “I do not have a pay bump. I’ve been anchoring for four months and I don’t know how long I’m gonna be anchoring for.” FR2 and FR1 both moved up the station ranks with little pay growth even with the official positions and increased responsibility. FR2 explained that eventually, “I did not feel like the salary was worth the literal hours of the day that I was there and the amount of work that I was putting in.” Then, FR2 learned the hard way that expressing loyalty does not assist in obtaining financial growth, “It was contract negotiations, super stressful and I thought it would bid me well to express my loyalty, apparently this is the wrong thing to do.” FR2 continued, “another station has to have interest in you for you to get the raise that you want.” Even those who felt they were in a better financial situation than journalists at other stations or positions, CR5, CR6, CR7, and CR3 agree the pay is not adequate to the work put in. However, “It’s not just about the workload, but, you know, cost of living and all the other economic factors that go into a society,” said CR6.

CR1 and CR6 think that times are changing and industry professionals are not putting up with the same situations that journalists in the past did. “I think for decades they were getting away with underpaying because, at the end of the day, they’re like, look you’re working at a television station,” CR1 said, “People aren’t feeling that way about TV anymore.” The generation entering the workforce is the same generation raised on social media. They also went through worldwide shutdowns during the global pandemic early in their careers, or just before. CR6 says the situation affected the importance of

work-life balance, “The American dream is not working yourself to death and not growing up to just work and be enslaved all the time.”

Employee Investment. The news industry’s major media companies that own multiple news stations across the United States are built and organized to act as a singular company, and as CR1 described it, each news station is like a department within the company. Employees are expected to obtain career and financial growth by working up the market ladder. “Perhaps the acceptance of churning as a positive sign of ambitious employees has diverted attention from the trend of experienced television news workers who are turning away from the industry and not churning within” (Legore, 2009, p. 7). Parent companies have built a system of growth through the company as a whole; therefore, turnover is expected because reporters should be moving up to higher markets – or “churning” (Rosentiel et al., 2007) – and new reporters from lower markets or newly graduated journalists should be moving into those vacant positions. FR4 pointed out that this structure is built for journalists to move every two years.

It kind of demoralizes, you know, like the feeling of that community. And it's like, I remember talking to people when I was, like, getting to know them. And they're like, ‘oh, yeah, you know, you're probably going to leave after two years, right?’ I'm like, I didn't say that, but, you know, you were thinking it. (FR4)

Several respondents desired career growth opportunities that are limited in their station. FR1 left their station after seven years due to a lack of career advancement. After asking the news director about FR1’s position and future growth, the news director told FR1 they could be a main anchor one day. “But [news director] said there's nobody

leaving and there's no promise that anyone will leave and that could be for 20 years. And so I was like, what's the point?” FR2 faced a similar dilemma.

I might have hung in there if I knew that [anchor] was gonna leave in the next year or two. But you don't, I can't know that and it's not my right to know that. So I just couldn't base my whole future in news off of that, you know? (FR2)

Working as an anchor, whether as an anchor and reporter or the main anchor, is often the path reporters take when advancing in their careers. However, not every journalist wants to sit at the anchor desk, some like being in the field meeting the community. Some stations have “franchise” reporters who do a feature or investigative reporting. CR3 is just beginning their career but sees no advancement for reporters besides the anchor route:

It's kind of “desk joby” to me. I respect what they do, but for me, being a reporter is what I really like. It's just that they get paid better, they have better hours. And as a reporter, you don't really get that chance.

CR3 continued with the discussion of career growth, but focused on the parent company:

I think that if these parent companies made a better effort to lay out different ways to advance, they may retain people better. Like I said, I don't know how I can advance as a reporter and I feel like I'm gonna have to be a trailblazer to do that. I don't wanna be a trailblazer, I just wanna be able to do what I wanna do.

CR1 and CR2 both moved to their current stations through their parent companies' transfer portals. Journalists can transfer to a new TV station within their parent company after one year under their current contract with a station without breaking and buying themselves out of the contract.

I look at it that way, it's like okay, we've got our markets from 1 to 210, you, you wanna move up in the company, you are our Nexstar individual and that's how you move. Now that's how I've kind of been doing the business. (CR1)

CR2 jumped 75 markets after one year by going through the parent company transfer system:

They always want you to move up the ladder and they prioritize people who already are in Sinclair. So I know growth-wise, if you're interested in another station, you could leave upward mobility after a year, which is how I got here.

Meanwhile, FR3 feared taking this type of action after seeing a peer terminated from their position at their station after attempting to transfer to another station in the company with no success.

Home life plays a role in participants' perception of career growth. Those who found their home in the location of the station cited knowing of less opportunity to obtain a comfortable financial situation or desirable hours. Meanwhile, those who are willing to move for the opportunity to climb the market to more desirable positions and larger compensation reported seeing career growth opportunities. Yet, it is possible for some to climb up the market ranks to get to their home cities and then decide to get out of the

industry. CR2 said, “There's a lot of people that I've talked to who only jump markets to go home and they go to their home market at their dream station, they hate it.” The reporter spoke of a friend who made it to their dream station, “is like, ‘I'm done. I hate this station. This was my dream my entire life. I did everything so that I could get to this point.’ And then he quit news.”

Journalistic Integrity

Though some participants were disconnected enough from their ownership to not have anything to discuss on integrity. FR3 boldly stated, “I think when you get into corporate land, ethics goes out the door.” According to Brislin (2004), when working under corporate capitalistic (or other) influence, the distinction between propaganda and journalism is the journalist's autonomy. Plus, Legore (2009) called the dissatisfaction with content quality a “significant” part of the journalist's decision to leave the industry (p. 102). Yet, the participants wonder if the corporations they work for even care about the content they make. “My question for upper management would be, do you value the money that you're making off of us and your bonuses more than you value the quality of the work that you're asking us to put on the air every day,” CR5 asked. FR4 and CR6 questioned if their small corporate organizations valued the news product and employees as well, both of which are small market stations owned by small corporations. FR4 stated if their ownership group showed that they valued the product, they would likely retain reporters. CR6 stated they understand that as smaller stations they are not the companies most profitable and thus receive less support. CR1 speculated this would be the case for small market stations owned by Nexstar, “The lower in the company you are the market wise, the less they care about you and treat them well.”

CR4 told of a situation where the corporation decided not to run a story because the subject of the sexual assault accusations bought commercial space on their channel. “I feel like that was, that was the biggest, and we didn't even finish the investigation,” CR4 said. CR4 stated there are situations of corporate intervention but it is rare and the station’s journalists are usually left to what they see fit for the community's interests. However, CR4 says that does not stop them from having to push stories that corporate executives support due to their relationship with the state’s governor. Two participants working for Sinclair-owned stations brought up a bucket system for pitching story ideas. Basically, the company insists that local reporters do stories around their community that fits in a topic range – a bucket – of a national interest story. Though, their perceptions of the system are quite different. CR2 thinks the system makes sense as the topics are relevant around the country, while CR5 sees it as an obstacle to covering what matters to the community they are in. “It makes you look really, really embarrassing,” CR5 said since competing stations have coverage of, “a really big ‘day-of’ story.”

How do journalists’ turnover intentions in their station and in the industry compare to their expressed POS from local stations and their respective ownership companies?

The researcher began the questionnaire with a request for the participants to discuss two things they enjoy about working as a local news journalist. The common responses journalists gave was the joy of being in the community, talking with people, telling their stories, and feeling like they did something that they see is important for the community around them. These are passionate individuals, some of whom leave the industry or newsrooms due to toxic behaviors, dissatisfaction in the direction of work,

lack of financial growth, burnout, some simply wish to move to bigger markets, and others face a lack of career growth locally – part of which is due to non-compete clauses in their contract.

Participants with positive POS experiences.

Staying at their station. CR7 spoke positively about their current station, “It’s very chill here.” Even stating they will most likely re-sign with the company at the end of their contract. It is noteworthy that CR7 did not have a positive POS experience at their former station, often comparing it to the “chill” station they work in now. While they did not buy out of their contract, they left without another station lined up. Yet, this journalist found a way to stay in the game by hiring an agent. Though, the future is up in the air, “Like I’m still in it for now. But you know, five or ten years down the line, I don’t know.”

The young journalist, CR3, spoke highly of their supervisor and corporate. This journalist is on a three-year contract and said they would consider resigning. Though the individual is not from the state their station is in, they found a community where they work. The supervisor support, peer relationships, and mentors with experienced colleagues foster a culture of support and growth in the newsroom. Though growth can only go so far in local newsrooms, CR3 noted there is not growth for people who do not want to anchor. Even though the participant seems likely to stay on another contract, they acknowledged the possibility of seeking that career growth elsewhere eventually.

Leaving their station, but staying in the industry. CR6 spoke highly of their station, the supervisors, and the news director. The news director focuses greatly on the socioemotional support to retain journalists at the small market. However, the corporate

executives outright stated they do not see much growth for the station, which does not help convince CR6 to stay. Additionally, CR6 grew up in a family that moved many times, “Nothing against the station. It's just ever since I was two years old, I've never lived anywhere longer than five years.”

Participants with negative POS experiences.

Leaving their station, but staying in the industry. CR1 knows how to use the corporate system for growth. Though the journalist in their second market expressed a generally negative experience with POS and outright said there's an issue with their station's culture, “organization of that station that's very bad.” This participant stayed at their first station for five years but does not plan on re-signing with their current mid-market station after their experience. The anchor/reporter also stated they have their eye on a specific market, and will stay in the industry to get there.

CR5 did not have positive things to say about the station and corporate leadership. This anchor/reporter spoke of a lack of support on multiple fronts: training, supervisor, autonomy, recognition, clear growth path, and reducing role stressors. After a round of layoffs, CR5 updated the researcher they were looking to move to a new station.

Leaving the industry. FR1 spoke both positively and negatively about instances of POS, but ultimately the lack of financial and career growth, newsroom tension between peers and leadership, schedule, and overall workload that increased without a pay raise pushed the long-time journalist out of the industry. This individual showed deep emotion and passion for their career as a journalist, just wishing the industry was

one people could thrive in. The participant admitted to missing the job and sometimes wishing to get back in it.

FR2 also spoke both positively and negatively about their experience in local news. While some instances, such as corporate leadership’s disconnect, the tension between colleagues, workload to pay ratio, schedule, and lack of career growth were areas discussed more negatively, the journalist loved their job. This individual could see themselves even going back to their station if a higher position opened up. Besides, as this participant mentioned previously, options elsewhere – such as their current job outside of news – allow for an individual to negotiate for more favorable treatment in POS areas that were low for FR2.

FR3 experienced one contract at one station and it ruined the industry for the passionate young reporter. The journalist expressed feeling disrespected by leadership, saw support from supervisors dwindle, and disagreed with the direction of content and coverage, “I think it's ratings focused, instead of journalism and the ethics behind journalism.” The reporter who called themselves a “sucker for breaking news” and tried to go above and beyond for the station described being treated poorly by management multiple times. This journalist left the industry after two years to work in PR. Unfortunately, FR3 felt threatened by their newsroom leadership’s response after they decided to leave:

They were like, you know, because we know between the two of us, we know a lot of people. And whether that's in the news or out of the news. PR We know a lot of people. So I'm just saying professionalism goes a long way.

FR4 said the first year at their second station was great. Then COVID-19 hit and the reporter faced burnout due to being the only reporter left at their station after people quit or were let go. On top of the burnout the journalist faced, they received little in return for their efforts.

We want to be able to have a good quality of life, but we can't do that because then either the pay is too low like there's not a lot of opportunities at the top. And ultimately the work-life balance is tough. FR4

The journalist looks at the local journalists as chess pieces for their parent company. Comparing them to positions in professional athletics that are considered expendable and therefore get signed to lower-paying contracts. The journalist left the industry to work in public education.

FR5 thought they found a good station they liked, “its ethical priorities aligned with mine.” Then, a new manager came in, “he's a major reason that a lot of people keep leaving.” This feature reporter thought about staying on with the station for one more year, but the company, Tegna, has a policy that no raises can be given on one-year contracts. Since FR5 is getting married and wants a family, they decide to save the stress and make more money in PR. “Why would I stay here for less money, more stress? And frankly, you just get talked to like shit. So it's like it just wasn't worth it in the end,” said FR5.

CR4's small underfunded station allowed the young journalist to gain experience before evening finishing school. However, all hope CR4 had for improving the station went out the door when they realized how little the station and its journalists were provided to work with. This reporter had to buy their equipment to have the quality

content they sought. This journalist received some support from newsroom leadership and through peer relationships, but for the most part, their POS experience was negative. The participant discussed leaving the industry moving close to family in another state and finding a media related job outside of traditional broadcast news.

What do journalists say should change about the industry to keep experienced journalists like themselves?

The researcher asked participants to think of industry changes that are necessary to keep experienced journalists like themselves in the industry long term. The answers journalists provided – pay, supervisor support, growth opportunities, organizational structure, content quality – are consistent with issues some faced in their newsrooms and issues previous research pointed to when looking at reasons journalists leave the industry.

Pay

“Top one for sure would definitely be the rate of pay,” FR2 said. CR2 agreed, adding, “I mean pay, everyone leaves for pay.” They were right, pay is the top-rated response to questions regarding industry changes necessary to retain journalists. Of the 12 participants, 9 directly stated there needs to be a change in journalists' salaries. Even the journalists stated the pay at their station and corporate were better than others addressed salaries. “Like I said, they pay well considering other stations, ” said CR5. “But that also goes back to the reporters being paid better too,” CR5 continued. FR4 gave credit to all employees who work to put the local news on every day behind the scenes and their need for more money too. “I mean, without them, we wouldn't be on the air,” FR4 said. If CR1 was making decisions, every local news employee would

receive at least a \$10,000 raise, “And I think the conversations will start changing.” The anchor/reporter pointed to a former colleague who likely would have stayed their entire career with just a \$5,000 boost, but the station would not budge. CR6 thinks it should be standard to get pay raises, especially for those on contracts; plus, when they receive increased workloads. CR7 said, “More pay wouldn't hurt just because we all are technically doing extra work with the segments.” FR5 compared the workload to salaries at their station and news PR role, “I made less and more work, but right now I'm doing less work and I'm making a lot more.”

Additionally, CR5 brought up the million-dollar compensation for corporate executives, “that should be getting dispersed to the employees.” The other three address a financial situation. CR4 stated the station needed more funding from its corporate. FR1 stated a bonus plan as an incentive to stay with the company or station. FR3 addressed the disparity of resources and incentives for executives versus employees, “we got backpacks for bonuses,” while the general managers got to see American rapper Ludacris perform. In total, all 12 participants addressed a need to change aspects of the financial distributions to accomplish or accomplish their job as journalists.

Support from Supervisors

There were seven responses from participants that discussed a need for increased support from supervisors. “Showing that they're invested in a person,” CR6 said. CR2 added supervisors should have, “better communication of knowing someone's goals.” The reporter argued that if people are utilized for what they are good at and want to do, they will work harder for their company. Some reporters just wanted more support to increase product quality. CR5 wanted management to collaborate more and provide

feedback. FR4 wanted them to value the work. FR5 suggested a way to increase content quality is having at least one supervisor from the area to better connect with the community. Plus, young reporters like FR3 need additional support from supervisors with stories. Meanwhile, CR1 thinks supervisors and some peers need to support their story pitches, “Just accept 20% more of the ones they reject.” Those who felt they received less support from their supervisors were more likely to leave their stations.

Growth Opportunities

Half of the participants suggested additional growth opportunities. Some discussed growth for their career while others supported growing skills. “I think that if these parent companies made a better effort to lay out different ways to advance, they may retain people better,” said CR3. The reporter wished there was transparency on how the business worked in general. CR6 consistently stated they understand it is a for-profit company and larger stations have higher profits. “I think just investing in growth for everyone and not just focusing on central stations and bigger markets, but instead trying to divvy out the support to everybody.” Both CR3 and CR6 point to a need for some sort of advancement within the station. CR6 stated giving an MMJ a photographer could be an incentive to stay while CR3 wanted growth for reporters who do not want to anchor, “having those, like, franchise reporters.” FR1 agreed, “That would be considered a promotion for people that do daily news.” FR2 added the importance of understanding where employees want to grow, “meetings and opportunities for them to like work on what they really wanna work on, you know?” Others also wanted growth in skills at their stations. CR4 states their station needs to train more in general and FR1 stated the company needs to provide more training and

continued education. FR3 also mentioned the corporate organization, stating they need “more promotions within the company.” Journalists want to be able to have successful careers and see growth of skill and promotion as part of the success. Yet, participants notice growth is lacking for personalized skills and local or diverse promotions.

Additional ideas

Though less than half of the participants, five journalists specifically discussed their station’s organizational structure and culture. Two participants, CR4 and FR3 said their human resources departments were outside the station and wished otherwise. CR2’s comment about the station is an HR process, the hiring for a role, “they literally move everyone like chess pieces.” CR2 explains how this leads to being moved to a new schedule with no extra pay for an unknown amount of time. This is due to the fact that stations’ newscasts air whether an official anchor is hired to take over the vacant positions or not, and the management must find someone to do the job on a short notice. CR4 also was disappointed in the hiring at their station. While they discussed in the interview it took months to replace a position, their complaint was about the individuals who get hired. CR4’s suggestion was to hire “people that want to be in the news industry.” Which does not seem like too much to ask of a news station. A more difficult change is the cultural issues that FR2 and CR1 talk about but cannot pinpoint. “I don’t know how to fix the newsroom culture, ” said CR1. “There’s a lot of change that needs to happen in a newsroom, but it’s hard for me to, sorry, come up with that,” FR2 apologized.

Others agreed there needs to be a change in content for better quality and how it is produced. “Why not two-day turns? You know, it’s arguably a better product,” CR7

argued against the current structure of reporters turning a news story in one shift. FR5 addressed the need of supervisors and editorial peers to trust the reporter to tell the story to minimize the risk of inaccurate assumptions by someone who did not receive all the details. FR4 added that a structure change can go further than just adding to the quality of journalism, “restructure how they do things. If they really want to build that trust back community.” FR1 thinks a restructure could allow for “beats” to make a comeback in the industry and it would retain journalists, “It's gonna make them feel like they're the expert in something and it's automatically gonna make it easier for them to do stories because they've built up all the contacts.” Similar to journalist’s beats being eliminated, making many journalists general assignment reporters, many photographer positions were eliminated in the industry and MMJ often does the work of the reporter-photographer duo. FR3 thinks the photojournalist positions should be more prevalent in newsrooms, which arguably increases the product quality and is safer for the employees to be in pairs. The last critique regarding the content produced by the station is for the parent companies, CR5 said, “At least act like you care about the work that we're doing. So that's frustrating.” The journalists care about journalism and ethics, they want their companies to care about those too.

Discussion

What is broadcast journalists’ current experience of POS from local stations?

Participants’ experiences of POS locally showed the importance of local support for keeping journalists both at the station and in the industry. These experiences journalists discussed are consistent with previous research stating the importance of supervisor support, peer support, and journalistic integrity in a newsroom (Chenot et al.,

2009; Dworznik, 2008; Entis, 2023; Hill, 2018; Hoak, 2021; LeGore, 2009; Russo, 1998).

Supervisor Support

Research shows a bad supervisor can drive a young professional out of any given industry within three years of starting in their career (Pease, 1991). This appears to be true in the experience of FR3 who left the industry after one contract and dealt with toxic leadership. The results also align with Pease (1991) stating poor management also drives experienced journalists out of the industry, as with FR5. This is especially true for executive leaders such as news directors, but others in the newsroom can provide much-needed help for employees. However, participants believe this support to be inconsistent among middle management. Perhaps, just as frontline employees lack support and training for their positions, these managers with inconsistent and unhelpful management practices are due in part to a lack of training and support for their positions as newsroom managers. Additionally, multiple participants recognized when their bosses were too busy for them and acknowledged the pressure from the top likely played a role in their management practices. Even with the range of experiences, supervisor support was consistently lacking at stations. The understanding among employees of the executive decisions about their direct managers shows journalists do not always blame the individual acting as their supervisor for all managerial issues, which is consistent with previous studies (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Levinson, 1965).

Journalists look to newsroom leadership for guidance and feedback to improve their skills as journalists. Some participants do not feel their growth is taken into account in the manner other participants' growth was considered by their station managers. Those

who received feedback and one-on-one work with leadership were grateful for the assistance they felt helped them improve in their career. Two stated they considered re-signing with the station in part due to the managerial support. Those who did not receive feedback wished they did. Others added they wished their management helped employees grow in the directions they want their careers to go by asking what their career goals are. As CR2 argued, if journalists were given the autonomy to tell the stories they are passionate about, the product could be better.

Supervisor support is an area of POS that station leadership can take control of. Although, assisting support from the corporation for supervisors and their subordinates would increase the effectiveness of the effort. While corporations should provide the necessary support for supervisor staff to provide support to their staff, supervisors can always encourage employees’ growth while simultaneously producing content the journalist is proud of. A journalist’s success can mean different things to each individual; however, a journalist can prepare themselves for a successful career in the local news industry by learning about potential employers’ supervisors, the support they provide, and the culture they foster before signing a multi-year contract.

Peer Support

Peer support programs were nearly non-existent among the participants. Nearly, due to the fact that CR5’s station did have a buddy program for staff, but the participant was never made aware until they were asked to be a buddy for an incoming reporter – not when CR5 was a new employee. Even without programs, newsroom relationships can be tight-knit (Robinson, 2011). Support from peers is the center of the circle of support for

journalists facing trauma (Hill, 2023). Plus, research shows, and these study participants agree, that peer relationships help retain employees (Chenot et al., 2009).

Station leadership can lead the way for peer relationships to develop by allowing opportunities for employees to interact socially. The peer relationship situations discussed by participants were developed organically among colleagues. This shows the importance of bringing peers together to encourage relationships. One example of this could be providing lunch or dinner for staff during major coverage or the following day to show appreciation to staff while simultaneously providing social opportunities. Organizations can also implement programs to foster peer support similar to the buddy system at CR5’s station to allow new employers to learn from a veteran reporter – though, its availability should be communicated efficiently. Notably, age differences seem to play a role in some peer-to-peer relationships, while not all. Close ages resulted in friendships among peers, while mentor-like relationships were found in more veteran co-workers. Both relationships among peers can help newsroom staff flourish at the station.

Journalistic Integrity

The journalists care greatly about content quality, but question if quantity is on the mind of some leadership. It has been stated the amount of content produced by stations has increased; plus, that turnover is common in local news. These factors leave stations understaffed in an industry that has experienced various rounds of layoffs as technology advances. The result is understaffed newsrooms producing more and more content. Some journalists’ management and peers were happy with mostly any story as long as there was content to air. Plus, some participants discussed days they produced multiple stories – some doing anchor duties too – within one shift.

The lack of autonomy in local news has researchers calling journalism a semi-profession. These results show some participants had semi-autonomy, and some more than others. CR1, FR1, CR5, CR3, and CR6 stated they did not have the freedom to choose their stories but were free to write their stories how they saw fit. Unfortunately, as FR1 and CR7 experienced in their careers, some peers in producer roles rewrote reporters' scripts or altered it to fit the producer's newscast. Leading to reporters being the target of an upset interviewee. FR5's management tried to take an interview away from them since it was a big story. Journalists should be encouraged and empowered to tell the stories they find in the way they gather the truth of the matter. Additional eyes on a script help monitor errors or fact-checking, but should not be rewritten by a journalist not covering the story directly. As for participants with more autonomy in their story choices, the content quality comes into question. FR3 was pitching stories two weeks in advance and wondered how to predict news, and FR2 and FR4 stated anything that was content was good for their station's leadership. CR2's high perceived autonomy made them feel trusted in their newsroom, while others were frustrated or content. In all, these experiences are consistent with previous research stating direction of content quality is a factor in journalists' decisions to continue or move in front their careers in news.

What is broadcast journalists' current experience of POS from their respective ownership companies?

Overall, participants didn't feel the organizational support from the companies that own their respective stations. The disconnect between executive leadership and frontline employees is consistent with research stating POS is felt less the further removed an employee is from the nexus of their company (Riggle et al., 2009).

However, these organizations impact frontline journalists’ daily work, careers, and reward they receive for their effort.

Disconnect

Participants appreciated the benefits they received from their company; however, the reporters felt the companies were disconnected from their daily jobs and needs. Participants stated they did not think corporate executives know what goes on in the newsrooms daily. CR4 stated they do not think the executives care. This disconnect from the day-to-day life of station staff can explain the lack of support parent companies provide for the station and its staff. The comment made by CR4 could be used to understand why journalism researchers continue to discuss issues that cause journalists to leave the news industry and corporations continue to allow turnover and other industry problems to continue in stations.

It takes hard work to be a local television reporter. Companies should provide the necessary resources to do their job, which includes updating equipment and technology and hiring more people. Companies can create more positions, or pay current employees for their workload. Additionally, participants stated they wanted to grow in their careers, but some do not know how to successfully do that through their company due to the disconnect. Parent companies and news stations need to improve their onboarding process to provide basic material employees need to know about the operations of their new newsroom and allow newsroom leadership to learn more about the new employee's goals to support meaningful growth that is beneficial to all parties involved.

Labor Contracts

The contracts between the participant and their company were not perceived as

job security. Instead, contracts are seen as an entrapment that allows the employee to obtain a larger workload, a change in daily or weekly obligation for extended periods, and even slight promotions without increased financial compensation or an increase in benefits. It does not allow the employee to leave their position without buying out of the contract with the company, yet the company can terminate the contract at any time. Entrapment feelings occur when employees have to remain with an organization due to the high costs of leaving (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Corporate media companies should work with stations to develop growth opportunities within individual stations that allow personnel to pursue career growth at the local level on top of the national level growth other company employees wish to pursue. Promotions do not always open, but companies could send employees to skill workshops, networking events, conferences, and cross-training to continue an employee's career growth while stationary in their position. Plus, parent companies must rework contracts to allow employees to experience career and financial growth at the station. This could make them feel secure in their position and limit the feeling of one-sided relationship the participants expressed about the benefits of their contracts. Understandably, news stations would want to have contracts with people who represent the company using their image, as they are making a financial investment in that person for advertising and do not want the employee to leave after a short period. However, maybe it would be effective to invest in keeping journalists at the station long-term and building an audience with them in the community they serve rather than replacing personnel every two to three years after strict contracts are up and the churn to another market. Especially considering turnover is expensive, since the company has to hire and

train a new employee. Additionally, it would benefit the industry if journalists were allowed to remain in the industry without moving their homes to a new location to work in a new market due to a non-compete clause in their contract. The company is allowed to own more than one station in a market but a journalist could technically be sued by the corporation if they left a station for another station in the same city. The Federal Trade Commission acknowledged the ability of non-compete clauses in company contracts to decrease competition and lower wages for both workers who are subject to the contract and those in the market who are not (Tompkins, 2023). It is hard enough for journalists to get out of a satisfying workplace with the high buyout corporations have for an individual to break a contract, it is more difficult to jump into an unknown and new industry to stay in the same city or move across the county for a job. Employees’ home lives should be considered during contract negotiations to allow more benefits for those doing the work.

Journalistic Integrity

Ironically, journalists are almost expected to not ask questions about their own industry’s practices, as if asking questions is not one of the key roles of a journalist. Yet, these intelligent professionals question how much their executives truly care about the journalism industry for its purpose in a democracy. This is consistent with Russo’s (1998) findings that state newspaper journalists that the profession and its values and ideas are the foundation and primary focus of the participants of the research. Many participants discussed issues with executives caring more about the profits rather than the product. Additionally, when organizations cut staff to provide more local news to regional markets – which begs the question of how “local” is local news when the content is regional – fewer and fewer journalists are left to fill in the gaps of content for increased air times.

While companies may be happy with the profit margins, journalists – and their audience – are disappointed in the product, and the workers become burned out from work overload. The actions of the organization to make a profit hurt the frontline workers and these individuals do not believe their employers care. Participants from massive media organizations down to family owned stations feel the executives do not and will not care about or support their contributions and well-being because it does not make the company money.

How do journalists’ turnover intentions in their station and in the industry compare to their expressed POS from local stations and their respective ownership companies?

Consistent with POS research, participants with higher perceptions of support from the organizations had lower intentions to leave either their station or their career. Likewise, those with low POS were more likely to leave their station and – depending on their personal life – their career.

Participants with positive POS experiences

Employee characteristics and personal life play a role in participants’ likelihood to re-sign their contract. Yet, stations that create positive POS experiences that local leadership can control (i.e. recognition, developmental growth opportunity, supervisor support, procedural justice, training, easing unnecessary stress in the stressful environment) develop more loyal employees. If stations and companies combine support, journalists can thrive both locally and by market hopping. This is evident with CR2 and CR3 who feel they are thriving in their early careers due to the support they receive. Plus, FR1 and FR2 who were mostly thriving in their careers until they reached a ceiling at

their local stations without the desire to move away. FR2 perceived higher levels of support from newsroom leadership and is one of the four study participants with a career update before the conclusion of this thesis.

Participants with negative POS experiences

The negative experiences of POS contributed to some journalists leaving the industry. All former journalists spoke of moderate to highly negative experiences and blamed certain antecedents of POS for their decisions to change careers: career growth, supervisor support, and pay. Plus, other aspects that are consistent with previous research on turnover in local news: content directions and work-life balance. Those who made a home in their current city are more likely to leave the industry after a negative POS experience and those who are willing to move leave their stations and join another by moving across TV markets. This is due to non-compete clauses not allowing former employees to join a competing station in the same city. The youngest participant with negative POS experiences left the industry after the first contract of their TV news career, and the supervisor support experience was especially low in this case as the journalists had multiple negative interactions with their news director. While some of the issues former journalists faced had to do with COVID-19, many participants did not feel supported as essential frontline employees working every day, sometimes with little communication of connection to the virus, to the newsroom, or with peers. Factors associated with the pandemic increased participants' stress levels, workloads, and understanding of the disconnect between the corporate and the stations, and disconnect from peers. Journalists who expressed negative POS from their company and stations felt expendable and showed the same loyalty to the organizations and the industry as it has

shown them.

What do journalists say should change about the industry to keep experienced journalists like themselves?

The industry changes participants wish to see in order to keep experienced journalists such as themselves are common responses journalists in previous research gave for why they left the local news industry (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; LeGore, 2009; Pease, 1991; Reinardy, 2014). In the local news industry, old habits die hard and the lack of change will result in the same old problems as seen with these participants.

Pay

Low salaries in local news is a big enough problem that participants responded quickly, without a doubt that stations and companies need to pay more to keep journalists. On-air journalists with the highest workloads – MMJs who shoot, write, and edit all content for their report – receive the lowest paycheck. Some local news workers have second jobs or do freelance work to make ends meet. Additionally, the role of an on-air broadcast journalist includes their appearance, which can put a dent in a small check with money spent on clothes, hair, and make-up for the job if an allowance is not offered. The local journalists’ desire for higher pay is consistent with decades of research addressing turnover in the news industry, both print and broadcast. The acknowledgment of the issue by the executive personnel who can make those changes seems non-existent aside from the increase in starting salaries in 2023 stated to attract more workers (Papper & Henderson, 2023b).

Supervisor Support

The results remained consistent with study stating supervisors greatly impact an

individual’s likelihood to stay at an organization and a young professional’s likelihood of staying in the industry. The inconsistencies between managerial support and its effectiveness is an issue stations can address internally. It is also an issue that corporations can address by providing managerial skill growth training and opportunities for individuals promoted to managerial positions. While participants were both negatively and positively affected by the support or lack of support they received from supervisors, many could acknowledge their lack of understanding of the extent of stress and pressures playing a role in their managers’ practices. Many could disconnect supervisors as individuals from their role as managers or the agents of the organizations due to the amount of other leadership locally or at the corporate level above their direct supervisors. This goes for some participants’ understanding of their news director having executive leadership above them as well. Yet, the acknowledgment does not eliminate their desire for better support from their local supervisors.

Growth Opportunities

Participants view their organizations as different from one another and their view on the industry structure greatly affects their perspective of growth opportunities. Those who look at their company as their employer with the expectancy of moving from station to station to gain career and financial growth are expecting to continue their careers in the industry. Those who made a home in the city and do not wish to move can hit a ceiling at their station with no financial or career growth in the foreseeable future. Additionally, there are not always positions that reporters find desirable, not everyone wants to be an anchor, and not everyone gets to be an anchor. Participants who are passionate about journalism want to tell important stories where they have time to dive deeper into the

reporting, but more investigative positions are lacking in their newsrooms. The only growth they see is eventually moving, which if the individual has a family, can contribute to the factors weighing on their decision to move and stay in the industry or stay home and get out of the industry. Notably, multiple participants referenced work-life balance, and it was even stated by CR6 that the younger generation who dealt with COVID-19 early in their careers developed a mindset more focused on home life and self versus living for their jobs as some older generations did and expected in the industry.

Tuohey (2023) discussed one station’s solution to lack of support, individual growth, and burnout among staff by implementing development days. FOX6 in Milwaukee provides staff with days to get away from the daily grind to focus on their personal growth in their field: “Two-day-turns” – for telling complex stories; “Learning” – to critique their work and that of other journalists in the market; “Sourcing” – to network and meet with current sources off camera; and “Shadow” days – allows newsroom staff to work one day shadowing a peer with a different job (Tuohey, 2023, para. 5). Since implementation of the development days management has seen an improvement in work on air and off, more empathy for each other's roles in the newsrooms, buy-in with the new program, and decreased turnover (Tuohey, 2023).

Additional Ideas

Multiple participants discussed the lack of HR locally to address issues, which seems like an important area of organizational operation. Though some have regional HR, this likely contributes to the feeling of disconnect from the parent companies that participants expressed. This could also help limit the ability of a news director to try to keep a former employee from getting hired. Additionally, in-house human resources can

address toxic work environment challenges with their professional knowledge. Lastly, an HR department could assist in the hiring process in multiple ways. First, the individual would be obligated to follow HR ethics when a potential employer calls about a prospective employee. It can also assist in getting individuals hired at the station quicker rather than employees selected to fill in, altering their schedule for extended and unknown periods.

Content and the role of the journalist is an important factor in journalists' perceptions of their organization and it contributes to their decision regarding their career. Organizations need to consider their role as news providers and their role as journalists when addressing POS and turnover in their newsrooms. Journalists work tirelessly to develop content for little pay, and some do not always feel proud of what they produce. Some asked that stations and organizations find a way to give journalists more autonomy, time, trust, and ethical support to develop quality content their community needs. However, some participants do not know if that is possible if it goes against the corporation's bottom dollar. Reinardy and Bacon (2014) found that organizational support is a significant and strong predictor of perceived work quality. Autonomy, a POS antecedent, is specifically mentioned in the study as an indicator of perceived work quality (Reinardy & Bacon, 2014).

Conclusion

It is obvious some aspects of POS rank higher as factors associated with turnover than others for broadcast journalists. Some of the antecedents journalists discussed more frequently and passionately about are controllable by the leadership at the local level while others are results of decisions made at the executive level. Situations of financial

compensation, career growth, supervisor decisions, procedural justice, and autonomy can involve input or control from the corporate organization. The labor contracts between the journalists and the news organizations can assist in entrapping the employees in a position with zero rewards for increased efforts and massive buyout agreements to leave. Other aspects of POS such as recognition, training, supervisor support, autonomy, and role stressors are often situations station leadership can and should address to retain employees. The long-standing tough guy mentality of newsrooms seems to be diminishing some with the new generation of professionals and companies are providing access to mental health resources, though the sources are not always useful, plentiful, or communicated to employees who need them.

Positive POS experiences at stations did not guarantee a reporter would re-sign with the station as employee characteristics and personal life impact their decisions, but it does seem to increase one's likelihood to re-sign. Those who had positive experiences with POS are expected to stay in the industry for the foreseeable future. Those with negative experiences left their stations. Those not willing to pack their lives and move across the country and those who were early in their career and never found newsroom support jumped out of the industry.

The areas of POS that industry leaders should pay attention to to keep good experienced journalists are increasing salaries, supervisor support, and growth opportunities. Additional issues participants agree need to be addressed that are not antecedents of POS but important for their daily roles. Specifically, providing the local organizations with human resource personnel and ensuring the stations' journalistic practices are ethical, productive, and of societal interest.

This study contributed to literature on POS as it provides a snapshot of the experience of local newsrooms, which is a workplace less commonly the subject in POS research. It also contributes to the understanding of the cause of turnover in the local news industry and how the structure of the industry to churn from market to market may contribute to experienced journalists leaving since the industry is not necessarily built for an employee to stay at a station long term.

Limitations

There are multiple aspects of limitations in the study. First, this is a small pool of broadcast journalists' personal experiences within areas of POS in the local newsroom. Additionally, half of the participants who are part of Data Set 1 did not receive the same set of questions as Data Set 2 interviewees. This is due to the first group being a part of a pilot study that expanded into this thesis study and the questionnaire became refined as research continued. This resulted in some aspects of the POS experience not being addressed by some participants or addressed indirectly by others. Also, a narrative analysis of POS allows for an in-depth understanding of individual experiences of these twelve journalists but not a general understanding of a high quantity of journalists as the research would result if the researcher used a quantitative approach to POS in local newsrooms. This was done to provide the journalist with an opportunity to describe their POS experiences to provide a glimpse into complex interactions between professionals in multiple newsrooms rather than rate their perception of the organizational support on a survey. Plus, the researcher worked in the industry, which can result in preconceived notions. However, providing narrative outlines of participants' experiences and addressing similarities between these statements and

previous research limits any preconceived notions held by the researcher. The professional experience also provided access to individuals participating in the research through being former peers at various points in their careers or during educational studies, or access to contact information of those who were not of acquaintance.

Research and Participant Update

In its totality, this study has expanded over 18 months from the point of starting the pilot study interviews to the conclusion of the expanded thesis. During this time, participants continue their daily lives within their careers. The following participants have an update on their work-life regarding the local news industry: FR2, CR1, CR4, and CR5. FR2 was sad to let their TV news career go. While they expressed both negative and positive POS experiences, they generally loved their job and just lacked financial and local career opportunities. The position the anchor/reporter was hopeful for opened, and FR2 took the opportunity to join their former station as an anchor. At the end of CR1's contract, they said goodbye to their newsroom and its leadership, which the reporter did not like to move up to their home market. Similarly to CR1, the young CR4 advanced their career exactly as they stated in the interview. CR4 moved to another state and works in an adjacent media field, but the content is still geared toward the Hispanic community. Lastly, CR5's station was hit with a round of layoffs by their ownership group shortly after the interview. The anchor/reporter survived the layoffs but did not stay at the station long. The reporter found another station in a higher market. This accounts for a third of study participants who had career updates after their semi-structured interview, but before the conclusion of the study. Additionally, as of April 23, 2024, following the conclusion and defense of this thesis, the Federal Trade Commission voted 3-2 to ban non-compete

clauses in the workplace (*FTC Announces Rule Banning Noncompetes* | *Federal Trade Commission*, 2024).

Future Research

Future research should explore the experiences of other newsroom employees (e.g., producers, editors, production, and web producers) to better understand the overall perception of organizational support in local newsrooms. Specifically, research on supervisors' POS experiences would greatly contribute to the understanding of organizational support from corporations and how it affects the support local leadership can provide employees. Future studies should also explore local news ownership practices and support from the point of view of corporate executives. Though content and journalism ethics were not topics directly addressed for understanding POS, journalists felt it was important and should be supported more by leading news organizations. This shows the need for more understanding of the direction and effectiveness of news content produced by today's news organizations locally and nationally. Plus, it would be interesting to understand the correlation between journalistic autonomy and audience ratings. Perhaps a case study comparing stations that encourage autonomy versus one that does not. Likewise, a case study comparison between a station that fosters a supportive environment built to retain journalists for many years versus a station built for journalists to churn through while climbing the market for growth to see which is more cost-effective for the station and company. This could provide a comparative perspective from a research standpoint of organizational structures and their ability to provide society with quality journalism by retaining experienced journalists at a station, or at least, in the industry. Simultaneously, these companies can compare a structure that could encourage

the audience to stick around due to familiar journalists on their TVs to the current structure of churning and its financial impacts based on ratings and turnover costs.

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