

On March 28, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that along with the COVID-19 pandemic, the world had to deal with an even more dangerous infodemic. The phenomenon of the infodemic had a clear impact on the activities of mass media, and consequently on the activities and work of journalists in the field of social communication. Some researchers even believe that due to this, the COVID-19 pandemic may be a historical turning point for journalism, similar to world wars or the invention of the camera (Jenkins, et al., 2021). The dissertation's research questions were formulated to examine these processes from the perspective of journalists themselves. The research project's objectives were oriented towards exploring the specifics of journalists' work in infodemic conditions and the challenges associated with these conditions, describing the process of transformations in the field of journalism, including the role of journalists as participants in media communication during the disinformation crisis, and explaining the impact of media communication changes during the pandemic on the work of journalists.

In presenting the current state of scientific knowledge and research on the issues addressed in the dissertation, research on the phenomenon of disinformation, the situation and transformations of media communication, and journalism itself, both before and after the outbreak of the pandemic, were utilized. The authors point to the intensification of the problem of producing and distributing false or manipulated content in the media sphere, especially in online channels. Researchers observe the impact of the increasing number of fake news, information overload, or the drastic acceleration of information dissemination on journalists' work. This includes approaches to content verification, which is becoming increasingly important, new conditions in the media market, and daily choices between maintaining professional ethics and personal gain, or professionalism and employer demands and time pressure.

The development of theoretical frameworks is based on functionalist theories, Pierre Bourdieu's theories on fields, media, and cultural production, which allowed highlighting the social aspect and the specifics of the functioning of mass media and their employees, as well as knowledge in the field of labor sociology. An essential part of the theoretical background revolves around concepts related to the media communication system, the functions of mass media, their evolution, and, of course, the roles of journalists in various contexts. Theories of network society, coding and decoding in specific conditions of network communication, as well as neogatekeeping theories, referred to as Network Gatekeeping, are also mentioned.

The research for the dissertation was conducted using mixed methods. The plan included triangulation of methods, in this case, quantitative research methods conducted on a representative group of journalists through online questionnaires, with a total of 302 respondents, and qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews, with 13 participants. The survey questionnaire consisted of thematic sections related to journalists' work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the phenomenon of disinformation, its impact on their responsibilities, practices related to identification and verification of fake news, and how journalists perceive their role in media communication. Qualitative research covered topics such as changes in the specifics of journalists' work caused by the infodemic, the importance of content verification, related practices, and the contemporary role and function of journalists in society.

The research conducted as part of the dissertation allowed for answers to questions about whether and how the way journalists obtain, verify, process, and distribute information has changed in contemporary times, as well as how journalists perceive their social role and their profession and its mission in the face of ongoing changes. Respondents clearly emphasized the significant increase in the threat posed by disinformation in recent years, and consequently, the need for careful content verification. This requires increasing amounts of time and work, which in turn affects the quality of materials delivered to the audience. Journalists admit that they are rarely trained in content verification, but at the same time, they are expected to deliver verified content based on credible sources faster and faster. This situation sometimes leads to conflicts between journalists and their superiors, increases the stress associated with their work, and manifests itself in frustration or negative assessments of their profession and its role in society.