Safety of Journalists in Campus Radio Stations in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the safety of journalists working in campus radio stations in Niger State, Nigeria, with the objectives of ascertaining the nature of safety violations, their perceived influence on journalistic practice and the level of awareness of safety issues. Anchored on the Social Responsibility Theory and the Safety of Journalists Framework, the study employed a descriptive survey design. A structured questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection and was administered to 117 campus radio journalists selected from across the state. The findings revealed that while some respondents reported experiencing forms of harassment such as physical attacks, threats and intimidation, the mean responses on most indicators were below the acceptable threshold, suggesting relatively low but still notable levels of safety violations. These threats, however, had measurable psychological impacts, influencing journalistic behaviour such as avoidance of sensitive stories and diminished professional motivation. The study also found that student journalists demonstrated a moderate to high level of awareness regarding safety protocols, including knowledge of risk assessment, first aid training and

international press freedom declarations. It concludes that campus radio journalists, though operating in educational environments, are not immune to the safety risks experienced by journalists in mainstream media. The study recommends the establishment of institutional safety policies, regular security training and proactive university frameworks to protect student journalists and uphold the principles of press freedom in academic settings.

Keywords: Campus Journalism, Student Journalists, Safety, Harassment, Niger State, Nigeria, Press Freedom,

Introduction

Recent studies have shown that violence, attacks and harassment against journalists in different parts of the world have significantly increased overtime (Ajakaiye, 2022; Kabir, 2022; Jamil, 2017). Thus, the issue of safety has become a major concern for journalists in practicing their profession, as it has received increase attention across the world in the last few years (Slavtcheva-Petkova, Ramaprasad, Springer, Hughes, Hanitzsch, Hamada, Hoxha & Steindl, 2023; Islam, Ali, Islam, Nobel, Shajib, Chowdhury & Islam, 2020). Harassment against journalists is a human right violation emphasized by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this might include freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (UNSECO, 2016, p. 122). In essence every individual has the right to receive information and harassment of journalists violates this right.

Community radio is a platform that provides information, education and entertainment within a community for the purpose of promoting happiness and welfare of members of community (Fombad & Jiyane, 2019). One major feature of radio is that it has the ability to penetrate the farthest of rural localities and it is a tool for development communication activities (Nadeem, 2023). The community radio station service carters to the interests of a defined area (Ojebode, 2009). The knowledge from sociology describes community as a cluster of people who interact and live in a common locality. According to the 2003 edition of the Nigeria Broadcasting Code, campus radio is classified as a form of community broadcasting (National Broadcasting Commission, 2003), an interpretation also supported by Mohammed and Monday (2019), Odunlami (2016) and Yusuf and Aji (2023). In Nigeria, it is operated by campuses of tertiary institutions, which include universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Campus radio station is run mainly by students of the school with the help of some technical assistants.

The campus radio station broadcast first and foremost to students and the immediate surrounding i.e. the community. It produces content tailored to the needs and interests of its local audience, often including educational programmes, local news, campus sports, spoken word and popular music (Segbenya et al., 2022). A campus radio station is of additional value to the institution's education programme in a comprehensive nevertheless cost-effective approach. Various educational programmes, entertainment programmes, public and administrative announcement complement the conventional lecture room content (Singh, 2011).

The safety of journalists in the campus radio is as important as the information they disseminate (Msughter & Abba, 2017). Rhoades (2025) underscores the need to prioritise the safety of campus journalists, noting that the sensitive nature of the stories they increasingly investigate and publish heightens their vulnerability to backlash, including censorship attempts, legal crackdowns and harassment. O'Sullivan and Abdul-Hafeez (2022) have also noted that engaging in investigative journalism as a student carries significant safety risks, including exposure to legal threats, harassment and even physical violence, especially when investigating powerful institutions like universities or political entities. Without the protection and resources of professional newsrooms, student journalists often face challenges such as lack of legal support, limited access to information and threats to both personal safety and academic standing.

In mainstream radio stations, journalists experience safety challenges ranging from threats in the form of legal, cultural, political and economic pressures; fatal violence and assault including death of journalists (Clark & Grech, 2017); and digital in form of serial hacking of journalists' computers and websites, online intimidation and digital surveillance of journalists (Suraj & Olaleye, 2017). In Niger State, the area of study, there are reported cases of journalists' harassment and intimidation. Hamza, Kolawole and Akote (2024) have highlighted several cases of harassment faced by journalists covering banditry in Niger State from 2015 to 2023. Journalists have reported being threatened by armed non-state actors and authorities, which jeopardizes their safety while attempting to provide essential coverage. Specific instances include physical attacks, emotional trauma and being targeted directly in conflict situations. Additionally, there are accounts of journalists being killed or injured as a result of their reporting on violent events, underscoring the severe risks associated with their profession in a context marked by heightened insecurity and violence. Aikulola (2021) cites an instance of the harassment of *The Punch* correspondent, Mr. Adebayo Ayinde, by the Niger State's Chief Press Secretary, Ms. Mary Noel-Barje in 2021. Noel-Barje allegedly

ordered the arrest of Mr. Ayinda and instructed security personnel to bar him from entering the Government House for undisclosed reasons.

What is the situation of journalists' safety in campus radio stations? Is their safety violated? If violated, what is the nature of the violations? Who are the perpetrators of the violations? Have the violations any influence on the practice of campus radio journalism? Are the journalists aware of safety issues in the practice of campus journalism? These questions constitute the problem this study investigated. Answers to these questions will contribute to evaluate, inform and educate media policy makers, government broadcast regulatory agencies and tertiary institution authorities on management of journalists' safety in campus community radio stations and how to foster a more proactive way of improving journalists' safety. The findings will further provide information and additional literature on the subject of safety of journalists in campus radio stations in Nigeria, an area that is under studied.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify incidence of violations against the safety of journalists working in campus radio stations in Niger State.
2. Find out the perpetrators of the violations against the journalists.
3. Determine the perceived influence of the violations on the practice of campus radio journalism.
4. Ascertain the journalists' level of awareness of safety issues in the practice of campus radio journalism.

Literature Review

Journalists' Safety

Safety is considered as a key factor in promoting freedom of expression, press freedom and the right to information. Journalists' safety is a way of providing an enabling safe and secure environment for journalists to practice their professional duties, a platform for the exchange of ideas, opinions and information **(**Mardaras, et al. 2017**)**. United Nations, UNSECO, European Council and a number of other international organizations have constantly emphasized the importance of the safety of journalists. In September 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council implemented a momentous resolution on the safety of journalists (Suraj & Olaleye, 2017). The idea of resolution is to provide protection for human rights and fundamental freedom which will enhance journalists' safety. For many years, the council of Europe has paid close attention to the issue of safety of journalists,

making it a priority to regularly provide for its 47 member States with necessary guidelines and instruments to enhance the safety of journalists (Clark & Grech, 2017).

In Africa, the digital Platform for the Safety of Journalists in Africa, a body comprising The African Editors Forum (TAEF), The Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), The Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), UNESCO Addis Ababa Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Article 19, launched a digital platform on the safety of journalists in Africa in 2021. The platform is expected to equip journalists with early warning capacities, improve approaches to protection of and mitigate threats and violence against journalists in the region (UNESCO, 2023).

Emphasis on the safety of journalists is paramount because violations and attacks against journalists have become a major challenge to journalists and media workers around the world. Within the past few decades, records show that there is a significant rise in various forms of violence, abuse and attack against journalists, ranging from physical assault, impunity, intimidation, threats, arrest and detention to sexual assault/harassment and undue pressure (Baroni, et al., 2022; Carlsson & Poyhtari, 2017; Clark & Grech, 2017).

A number of factors influence and pose a threat to journalists' safety which includes war, rape and gender-based attack, natural disasters and emotional distress. In some countries journalists have fallen victims of attacks and threat as a result of their revealing of sensitive information on certain issues of public concern (Carlsson & Poyhtari, 2017).

Campus Radio

Campus radio is a type of radio station that is run by the management and students of tertiary institutions and is often referred to as student radio because of the unique programmes it broadcasts (Sabran and Abd Karim, 2018). Campus radio stations are licensed and regulated by the government of the country they operate in. Campus radio stations reflect their campuses and the communities that are covered by their broadcast range. The role campus community radio stations play within their coverage area is pivotal in educating, entertaining and informing students, staff and members of the community within the operational area of the station (Nartey, 2013). The fundamental role of a campus radio station is to contribute to the primary mandate of an educational institution, which is the provision of formal education (Ubong & Okpor, 2018). The campus community radio is made up of a group of enthusiastic and passionate student and staff

journalist broadcasters and reporters who volunteer to work in the campus radio station and a few paid staff that oversea the activities of the station (Segbenya, et al., 2022).

The first campus radio station was established in the United States of America in the 1960s after which the practice spread across to Canada, Europeand other African countries (Osunkunle, 2009). In Nigeria the history of campus community radio can be traced as far back as 1982, when the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos requested from the Federal Ministry of Information and Communication a licence to operate a radio station. The licence was granted after 20 years in 2002 under the umbrella of the media deregulation policy of 1992. The radio station, 103.1 FM commenced operation in 2004 as the first campus radio in Nigeria (Mwantok & Aikulola, 2020). The University of Jos campus radio is the first in Nigeria to have gone digital and that was in 2011 (Liman, 2016). As at 2020, there were over 50 licenced campus radio stations in Nigeria (Obialo, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Two theories – Organizational Safety Climate Theory and Social Responsibility Theory – constitute the theoretical framework of this study, by provide a comprehensive lens for analysing the safety of journalists in campus radio stations. Introduced by Zohar (1980) and later expanded by scholars such as Bamel, Pandey and Gupta (2020), Organizational Safety Climate Theory defines safety climate as the shared perceptions among employees regarding how much priority their organisation places on safety (Syed-Yahya, Idris & Noblet, 2022). Rooted in organisational behaviour and social psychology, the theory asserts that perceptions of safety are influenced by visible leadership commitment, effective communication, employee involvement and psychological safety (Oah, Na and Moon, 2018). When these factors are present, employees are more likely to engage in safe practices; when absent, unsafe behaviours may become normalised (Luo, 2020). In the context of campus radio stations, this theory highlights how institutional culture and internal dynamics such as leadership support and peer engagement affect journalists' safety awareness and practices, aligning directly with the study's objectives on safety violations, sources, impacts and awareness.

Complementing this, Social Responsibility Theory, which emerged from the normative theories of the press, posits that the media have a duty to serve the public good and that society must, in turn, ensure press freedom and protection (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1984). Applied to campus journalism, this

theory underscores the collective ethical responsibility of university authorities, student unions and the broader academic community to protect young, often inexperienced journalists. These journalists may cover sensitive issues that challenge institutional interests, making them vulnerable to threats. While the internal safety climate addresses organisational-level dynamics, Social Responsibility Theory broadens the scope to include external societal and institutional influences that determine the level of freedom and security afforded to campus journalists.

Integrating both theories allows the study to address both micro-level factors, such as safety culture and internal communication and macro-level influences, including institutional accountability and societal support. The Organizational Safety Climate Theory provides insight into the day-to-day safety realities within campus radio stations, while Social Responsibility Theory frames the broader obligations of educational institutions and communities in safeguarding press freedom. Together, these frameworks enable a robust examination of the incidence and nature of safety violations, the identity of perpetrators, the influence of these violations on media practice and the level of safety awareness among student journalists in Niger State.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive research design, employing the survey method, which was deemed appropriate for collecting the views of journalists working in campus radio stations across Niger State regarding their level of safety while carrying out their duties. A census approach was adopted due to the relatively small population size (Skinner, 2018; Molenberghs, 2011). The total population comprised 117 journalists drawn from three campus radio stations: Search FM 92.3 at the Federal University of Technology, Minna; Click FM 89.9 at Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai; and Ultimate FM 103.9 at the College of Education, Minna. The staff composition included student volunteers, staff volunteers and employed personnel. Data on the personnel were obtained through oral interviews with station managers during the 2018 data collection period.

Data were collected using a 24-item instrument titled *Safety of Journalists in Campus Radio Stations' Questionnaire (SJCRSQ)*. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A gathered demographic data, while Section B addressed the four research objectives through items structured on a Likert scale. These items assessed incidents of safety violations, identified perpetrators of such violations, examined the impact on journalists and evaluated levels of safety

awareness. The instrument underwent content validity assessment and was tested for reliability using the Split-Half method, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.93, indicating a high level of reliability. The questionnaire was administered manually on a face-to-face basis and all 117 copies were returned and found usable, resulting in a 100 percent response rate.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Percentages described the demographic data, while means and percentages were employed to interpret responses on the thematic variables. Based on statistical guidelines, a mean score of 2.50 or above on the 5-point scale indicated agreement with a statement, while a score below 2.50 denoted disagreement (de Smith, 2021; Illowsky & Dean, 2018). Microsoft Excel 2023 was used for data entry, coding and cleaning, while the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used to generate tables, graphs and means.

Findings

Violations against the Safety of Journalists in Campus Community Radio Stations

Table 1: Violations against the Safety of Journalists in Campus Radio Stations in Niger State (N = 117)

Statement	1 F (%)	2 F (%)	3 F (%)	4 F (%)	5 F (%)	M	Remark
Physically attacked	0 (0)	64 (54.7)	43 (36.8)	10 (8.5)	0 (0)	2.54	Accepted
Sexually harassed	1 (0.8)	73 (62.5)	37 (31.6)	6 (5.1)	0 (0)	2.41	Rejected
Victim of attempted assassination	5 (4.3)	78 (66.7)	33 (28.3)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	2.26	Rejected
Detained by the police	0 (0)	76 (65.0)	37 (31.6)	4 (3.4)	0 (0)	2.38	Rejected
Families threatened	2 (1.7)	78 (66.7)	36 (30.8)	1 (0.8)	0 (0)	2.31	Rejected
Received threatening messages/calls	1 (0.8)	70 (59.8)	37 (31.6)	6 (5.1)	3 (2.7)	2.49	Rejected
Threat of academic victimization	1 (0.8)	70 (59.8)	39 (33.4)	7 (6.0)	0 (0)	2.44	Rejected

Grand Mean: 2.40 (Rejected)

Note. 1 = Undecided, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree; M = Mean.

The data presented in Table 1 provide insight into the various forms of violations experienced by journalists working in campus community radio stations in Niger State. The analysis shows a mixed pattern of experiences, with some violations appearing more prevalent than others. The responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale and a mean score of 2.50 or higher indicates acceptance of the occurrence, while scores below 2.50 suggest rejection, as explained in the method section of this report.

Among the listed violations, only "Physically attacked" recorded a mean score of 2.54**,** which crosses the threshold for acceptance. This implies that, although relatively moderate, physical attacks are acknowledged as a genuine safety concern among the respondents. The next closest item to the acceptance threshold was "Received threatening messages and calls", with a mean score of 2.49, suggesting that a considerable number of campus journalists had experienced this form of intimidation, though it falls just short of the acceptance mark.

All other items, including sexual harassment (M = 2.41)**,** attempted assassination (M = 2.26)**,** detention by the police (M = 2.38)**,** threats to families (M = 2.31) and threats of academic victimisation (M = 2.44), were rejected by respondents as not being common or widespread experiences. The grand mean of 2.40 indicates that, on the whole, violations against campus journalists are perceived to be relatively infrequent or not severe enough to meet the acceptance benchmark across the board. However, the relatively high values close to 2.50 in multiple items suggest a latent risk environment, especially regarding physical threats and intimidation. These findings highlight that while overt acts of violence may not be rampant, the environment in which student journalists operate is not entirely safe or free from intimidation. The close margins for several items imply a need for proactive safety measures and institutional frameworks to protect student journalists, especially as they begin to engage in more sensitive and investigative reporting.

Perpetrators of Violations against Safety of Journalists In Campus Community Radio Stations

Table 2: Perpetrators of Violations against the Safety of Journalists in Campus Radio Stations in Niger State (N = 117)

Statement	1 F (%)	2 F (%)	3 F (%)	4 F (%)	5 F (%)	M	Remark
Institutional security personnel	3 (2.6)	57 (48.7)	42 (35.9)	14 (12.0)	1 (0.8)	1.71	Rejected
Students	1 (0.8)	58 (49.6)	50 (42.8)	7 (6.0)	1 (0.8)	2.56	Accepted
Union leaders	0 (0.0)	65 (55.5)	47 (40.2)	5 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	2.48	Rejected
Lecturers	2 (1.8)	59 (50.4)	48 (41.0)	8 (6.8)	0 (0.0)	2.53	Accepted
Management staff	3 (2.6)	64 (54.7)	47 (40.2)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.7)	2.44	Rejected
Paramilitary/military officials	1 (0.8)	64 (59.8)	46 (39.4)	4 (3.4)	2 (1.7)	2.50	Accepted
Courts	1 (0.8)	73 (62.4)	40 (34.2)	3 (2.6)	0 (0.0)	2.38	Rejected
State officials	0 (0.0)	70 (59.8)	43 (36.8)	2 (1.7)	2 (1.7)	2.45	Rejected
Political party affiliates	2 (1.7)	75 (64.2)	35 (29.9)	4 (3.4)	1 (0.8)	2.38	Rejected

Grand Mean = 2.38 (Rejected)

Note. Scale: 1 = Undecided, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree; *M* = Mean. A mean score of 2.50 and above indicates acceptance; below 2.50 indicates rejection.

Table 2 presents the responses of campus journalists (N = 117) regarding individuals or groups responsible for violations against their safety within the campus broadcasting environment. The analysis shows that only three categories of perpetrators were accepted by respondents as notable sources of violations: students (M = 2.56), lecturers (M = 2.53) and paramilitary or military officials (M = 2.50). Each of these had a mean score equal to or above the benchmark value of 2.50, indicating agreement by a substantial portion of respondents.

Conversely, respondents rejected the notion that other stakeholders were significant violators of journalist safety. These included institutional security personnel (M = 1.71), union leaders (M = 2.48), management staff (M = 2.44), courts (M = 2.38), state officials (M = 2.45) and political party affiliates (M = 2.38). Although some of these actors scored close to the acceptance threshold, they ultimately fell below the cut-off point.

Overall, the grand mean of 2.38 indicates a general rejection of the hypothesis that perpetrators of violations against campus journalists are widespread across all institutional structures. However, the identification of students, lecturers and security operatives as key violators suggests that threats often originate from within the same educational community, reflecting a troubling internal culture that may undermine press freedom and student safety.

Influence of Violations on the Practice of Campus Radio Journalism

Table 3: Respondents' Perception of the Influence of Violations on the Practice of Campus Radio Journalism (N = 117)

Statement	1 F (%)	2 F (%)	3 F (%)	4 F (%)	5 F(%)	M	Remark
I have become biased in administering my duties as a result of threats and violence against me	0 (0)	64 (54.7)	43 (36.8)	10 (8.5)	0 (0)	1.86	Rejected
I have avoided reports on issues that could expose me to threat and violence	1 (0.8)	73 (62.5)	37 (31.6)	6 (5.1)	0 (0)	2.61	Accepted
I feel like withdrawing from journalistic duties as a result of threats and violence I experience	5 (4.3)	78 (66.7)	33 (28.2)	0 (0)	1 (0.8)	2.53	Accepted
I can reveal information obtained from news sources in confidence when under intense pressure	0 (0)	76 (65.0)	37 (31.6)	4 (3.4)	0 (0)	2.51	Accepted

Grand Mean: 2.38 (Rejected)

Note. Scale: 1 = Undecided, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. M = Mean.

Table 3 presents the perception of campus community radio journalists in Niger State regarding how violations against their safety influence their professional conduct and journalistic integrity. Overall, the grand mean score of 2.38 suggests that, on average, respondents do not perceive these violations to have a strong negative influence on their practice, leading to the overall remark of Rejected.

However, when individual items are examined, certain indicators show significant effects. For example, the statement "I have avoided reports on issues that could expose me to threat and violence" yielded a mean score of 2.61, which is above the benchmark of 2.50 and is thus accepted. This suggests a noteworthy tendency towards self-censorship among campus journalists due to safety concerns. Similarly, the statement "I feel like withdrawing from journalistic duties as a result of threats and violence I experience" received a mean of 2.53, indicating that such violations could lead to withdrawal or loss of interest in journalistic engagement.

Conversely, the lowest mean score of 1.86 was recorded for the item "I have become biased in administering my duties as a result of threats and violence against me". This implies that despite the challenges, most campus journalists strive to maintain objectivity in their professional responsibilities. Additionally, the mean score of 2.51 for "I can reveal information obtained from news sources in confidence when under intense threat and pressure" reflects a subtle ethical concern regarding the protection of confidential sources under duress, although it still passes the threshold for *a*cceptance.

On the whole, while the overall perception appears to downplay the influence of safety violations on campus radio journalism practice, individual responses reveal areas of professional compromise and psychological burden. These insights underline the importance of institutional safeguards and psychosocial support systems to help student journalists manage risks without compromising their ethical standards or professional engagement.

Level of Awareness of Safety Issues among Campus Radio Journalists

Table 4: **Respondents' Level of Awareness of Safety Issues in the Practice of Campus Radio Journalism (N = 117)**

Statement	1 F(%)	2 F(%)	3 F(%)	4 F(%)	5 F(%)	M	Remark
Knowledge of the need to be modestly dressed as a journalist in campus community radio	0 (0)	4 (3.4)	2 (1.7)	35 (30.2)	76 (64.7)	4.56	Accepted
Knowledge of the international declaration on the protection of journalists and press freedom	0 (0)	8 (6.8)	8 (6.8)	40 (34.2)	61 (52.2)	4.32	Accepted
Knowledge of journalists' security training for journalists in campus radio	6 (5.1)	13 (11.1)	30 (25.6)	29 (24.8)	39 (33.4)	3.12	Accepted
Knowledge of first aid training and conduct of comprehensive and regular assessment of risk for journalists in campus radio stations	6 (5.1)	20 (17.1)	25 (21.4)	29 (24.8)	37 (31.6)	3.61	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.90 (Accepted)

Note. 1 = Undecided, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree; M = Mean.

Table 4 shows the respondents' level of awareness of safety issues related to the practice of campus radio journalism in Niger State. The findings indicate a generally high level of awareness among respondents across the four measured indicators. Notably, majority of the respondents (64.7%) strongly agreed and 30.2% agreed that they were aware of the need to be modestly dressed as journalists within campus community radio environments, yielding a high mean score of 4.56. This suggests that the respondents recognised the importance of professional appearance in relation to safety and perception.

Furthermore, awareness of international declarations on the protection of journalists and press freedom also scored highly, with 52.2% strongly agreeing and 34.2% agreeing. The resulting mean score of 4.32 indicates that the respondents are well informed about global safety protocols and legal protections relevant to journalism. These findings are positive and suggest that such international frameworks may be filtering down to the campus level, contributing to a more informed student journalist population.

Conversely, lower mean scores were observed in awareness of more practical safety training measures. For instance, while knowledge of journalists' security training recorded a moderate mean of 3.12 and knowledge of first aid and regular risk assessment training scored 3.61, the responses were more evenly distributed across the rating scale. This suggests that while awareness of fundamental safety principles is relatively high, familiarity with institutionalised or structured safety training programmes is less consistent. Despite this, the overall grand mean of 3.90 signifies a broadly accepted level of safety awareness, reinforcing the importance of continued safety education and training among campus radio journalists.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal a troubling reality: campus radio journalists in Niger State are not insulated from the dangers faced by their counterparts in mainstream media. Although the overall level of violations was statistically rejected (grand mean = 2.40), the mean score for physical attacks (M = 2.54) exceeded the decision threshold, indicating a notable concern for physical safety. This aligns with the broader research landscape, which shows that journalists, regardless of institutional level, face increasing threats to their safety. Specifically, just as mainstream journalists are routinely harassed and intimidated (Ajakaiye, 2022; Ali, Arab, Majid, Bhati and Rehman, 2021), campus radio journalists in this study also reported both online and offline threats to their physical and

psychological safety. Moore and Ewell (2025) further highlight that student journalists are facing backlash, censorship and press freedom violations to an unprecedented degree, accounting for 21% of all journalist arrests and detentions in the United States in 2024. This international trend underscores that the campus journalism environment is not exempt from the intensifying repression facing the wider media industry.

The study also reveals that the primary perpetrators of these safety violations are internal actors, namely students (M = 2.56), lecturers (M = 2.53) and paramilitary/security officials (M = 2.50). This is consistent with patterns observed in the mainstream press, where security and government agencies are among the most frequently implicated in the harassment of journalists (Watson, 2021; International Press Centre, 2020). The internalisation of risk within the academic environment is particularly alarming, as these institutions are expected to nurture journalistic ideals and safeguard student journalists. The Organisational Safety Climate Theory (Zohar, 1980) helps explain this situation, suggesting that when institutional environments do not prioritise or enforce safety standards, a culture of silence or normalised abuse may develop. Similarly, the findings echo Social Responsibility Theory (Siebert et al., 1984), which calls for institutional actors, including universities and regulators, to protect press freedom as part of their civic obligation. Failure to uphold this responsibility contributes to a deteriorating climate for campus journalism, reducing its potential as a platform for democratic engagement and student voice.

In terms of the effects on journalistic practice, while the grand mean of 2.38 indicated an overall rejection of negative influence, certain indicators suggest deeper challenges. For instance, journalists reported avoiding certain stories (M = 2.61) and considering withdrawal from journalistic duties (M = 2.53). These behavioural shifts mirror those found in the mainstream media, where harassment and intimidation often induce fear, lethargy and anger, ultimately reducing journalistic output and quality (Miller, 2023; Kim & Shin, 2022). Despite these constraints, campus journalists demonstrated high awareness of safety precautions and international protection frameworks (grand mean = 3.90). This supports the findings of Tsui and Lee (2021) and Suraj and Olaleye (2017) who also reported high safety consciousness among professional journalists in Nigeria and Asia, respectively. The problem, therefore, is not ignorance but the systemic and institutional barriers that prevent the implementation of safety protocols. In this regard, the Organisational Safety Climate Theory and Social Responsibility Theory converge in their utility, highlighting the need for both institutional

commitment and ethical duty in safeguarding journalistic practice, be it in campus environments or the broader media landscape.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, it is concluded that campus radio journalists in Niger State are exposed to multiple forms of safety violations that mirror those experienced by their counterparts in mainstream media. These include harassment, threats, censorship and intimidation (both online and offline). Perpetrators range from institutional actors such as lecturers, union leaders and security personnel, to student groups. Such threats, though not universally reported, have been found to undermine journalistic practice by fostering fear, self-censorship and emotional distress among affected student reporters. However, the study also shows that many campus radio journalists are aware of best practices for safety, including dressing modestly, accessing relevant training and understanding international protection frameworks. This level of awareness suggests that with proper institutional support, the negative impact of such violations can be mitigated.

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are made with the intention that, if implemented, they will foster a safer environment for campus journalism, empowering student journalists to uphold ethical standards and contribute meaningfully to democratic discourse on their campuses:

1. Institutional Enforcement of Journalist Protection Protocols: Campus authorities and media centre coordinators should institutionalise policies that guarantee the safety and independence of student journalists. This includes enforcing provisions of the National Broadcasting Code (NBC, 2003) and international frameworks protecting press freedom.
2. Capacity Building and Training: Regular safety and ethical training sessions should be organised for campus journalists, focusing on first aid, risk assessment, security protocols and digital safety. Collaboration with press freedom organisations can strengthen this initiative.
3. Clear Channels for Reporting Violations: A formal reporting mechanism for safety violations should be created within each campus, allowing student journalists to report incidents without fear of retaliation. These should be handled confidentially and professionally.
4. Engagement with Security Personnel and Stakeholders: There should be ongoing dialogue between student journalists and security agencies, school management and student unions to sensitise them on the roles, rights and safety of campus journalists.

5. Psychosocial Support and Counselling: Institutions should provide access to mental health support for student journalists affected by safety violations to prevent long-term trauma and emotional fatigue.
6. Monitoring and Advocacy by Civil Society: NGOs, donor agencies and press freedom advocates should include campus radio journalists in their safety programmes, recognising them as a vulnerable but vital segment of the journalistic community.

Limitations of the Study

One notable limitation of this study is its restricted geographical scope, as it focused solely on campus radio stations within Niger State, Nigeria. This narrow focus may limit the generalisability of the findings to other states or regions with different institutional cultures or security dynamics. Secondly, the self-reported nature of the data collected through the questionnaire may have introduced response bias, particularly on sensitive issues such as physical attacks, intimidation, or ethical compromises. Respondents may have either underreported or exaggerated their experiences due to fear, loyalty to their institutions, or lack of full disclosure. Additionally, the study relied predominantly on descriptive statistics without inferential analysis, thereby limiting its ability to establish correlations or causality between variables such as safety awareness and journalistic behaviour. Lastly, the study was conducted in 2018 and given the dynamic nature of journalism and campus environments, some of the findings may have become outdated due to evolving institutional policies or political climate.

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