Psychological Safety of Journalists Covering Conflict in Borno State

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Abstract

This study analysed the psychology of journalists covering conflict in Borno State. The objectives of the study are: to analyse the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State; to examine the relevance of psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State; to identify the challenges facing journalists covering conflict in Borno State and to address identified challenges facing journalists covering conflict in Borno State. In-depth interview was used to elicit information from a group of journalists in the state. The study used qualitative approach as well as Cultural Theory and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to present the data. A total of 10practising journalists in Borno State were purposively selected for the study. The findings of the study reveal that the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno Stateis a major concern of journalists in the area and that journalists covering conflict in the state are being traumatised by constant engagement in conflict. The results of the study also show that the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State is significant. The study concludes that psychological safety of journalists in the state matters because there should be no story that is worth the trauma or blood, not to talk of the life of a journalist in the state.

***Key words**: Conflict, Journalists, Media, Nigeria, Borno State, Psychology*

Background to the Study

Psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State isincreasingly becoming an important subject in the journalism profession. All dimensions of safety of journalists matter because there should be no story that is worth the trauma or blood, not to talk of the life of a journalist. Like any other professional in the course of duty, the journalist is entitled to practisinghis profession in total safety. Unfortunately, the story is not all that rosy. Increasingly, journalists are targeted for elimination due to the

nature of their job which makes them vulnerable to those who feel threatened by what they do (Pate, 2017).

One of the attacks to journalists' safety is psychological trauma. Each year many journalists all over the world suffer psychological trauma, indignities, jail terms and injuries; some get killed and the culprits were never prosecuted. Here in Nigeria, journalists have at different times suffered multiple forms of safety breaches. Some were killed, many were injured or maimed and a majoritywere harassed. For instance, the Boko Haram terrorism and violent extremism that has ravaged Nigeria and Republics of Chad, Niger and Cameroons from 2009-2020 has exposed weaknesses in the safety policy and protocols for local journalists. In the midst of the violence, journalists demonstrated their resilience to report, with severe consequences for their safety and professional integrity. Some were killed, many injured and most were threatened by the terrorists and the authorities. Pressure was mounted on journalists and media houses from the public, the terrorists and the security agencies (Msughter& Abba, 2017).

Journalists require autonomy, independence, flexibility and credibility to investigate issues that may be dangerous to their safety. As 'watchdogs', their actions may offend groups or individuals, with repercussions for their personal and institutional safety. Unfortunately, the nearest official position on the safety of journalists in Nigeria is contained in the mandate of the Nigerian Press Council, which directs the Council to "ensure the protection of the rights and privileges of journalists in the lawful performance of their duties" (NPC Website). Similarly, the Nigerian Freedom of Information (FOI) Act offers an element of protection, which is consistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy from adverse consequences for disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorization and established procedures for the achievement of those purposes (Pate, 2017).

According to UN (2019), 95 per cent of journalists killed in armed conflicts are locally based journalists. In Syria, for example, 90 per cent of journalists killed were locals (Dlewati, 2016). Over the past decade, issues surrounding the safety of journalists have gained

increasing prominence in large part due to the awareness of the ever growing number of journalists killed and the collateral advocacy of organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and UNESCO and the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. On 27 May 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution condemning all violations and abuses committed against journalists (International Media Support, 2019). Thus, many researches should be conducted to determine the vulnerability and suffering of journalists so that appropriate measures can be taken to protect and provide safety for journalists.

The psychological data obtained from journaliststo date have all been collected in European,American or Middle Eastern theatres of conflict.No comparable data are available for conflicts inAfrica, a notable omission, given the fact that ofthe continent's 53 countries, half are either currentlyat war or have only recently seen the end of armedconflict. The present study addresses this dearth ofdata by focusingon Nigeria. The reasons for choosing this country were twofold: the presence of avibrant pressanda recent history of significant violence, namely terroristattacks. Feinstei, Wang and Owen (2015) aver that good journalism is a pillar of civil society and it depends on healthy journalists. It is against the foregoing that this study exploresthe often less academically addressed subject of psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State.

Problem Statement

Empirical evidence by International Media Support(2019)shows that for many local or indigenous journalists covering their country's conflicts, there is little support available and media development organizations have only recently begun to integrate psychosocial support into their safety programmes as part of a holistic approach (physical, digital, psychosocial) to safety of journalists.

IMS (2019) established that while there has been increasing attention paid to the physical and digital safety issues these

journalists face, less has been done with regardto psychosocial support. But addressing the psychosocial needs of local journalists and the support available is imperative for the well-being of local journalists who are impacted directly by psychologically traumatizing events happening around them. These needs also vary from context to context. Trauma affects the output of journalists; if they are traumatized they are more likely to self-censor which can also have a negative effect on content production and peacebuilding (Betz &Beighley, 2018).

According to Buchanan and Keats (2011), there is need for research into understanding the effects that fear and psychological trauma have on journalists. Unlike their international colleagues, local journalists usually have no escape from the threats and intimidation or the traumatic environment and may be both witness and victim. Therefore, there is need to strengthen the body of knowledge in the area of psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State.Within this context, the study is conceived.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To analyse the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State.
2. To examine the relevance of psychological safety of journalists covering conflict inBorno State.
3. To identify thepsychological challenges facing journalists covering conflict in Borno State.
4. To address the identified psychologicalchallenges facing journalists covering conflict in Borno State.

Literature Review

BornoState is in Northeastern Nigeria and its capital is Maiduguri. It was formed in 1976 from the split of the North-Eastern Nigeria when 12 states were created across the country. The neighbouringYobeState was carvedout from the BornoState in 1991. Borno is dominated by the Kanuri tribe, largely in the northern part of the state and the central but to the south has some

ethnic groups dominating the area such as Babur, Lamang, and Marghi (Muhammad&Msughter, 2018).

In the state also there are Shuwa Arabs who are the descendants of Arab people; they largely occupy towns and villages to the Lake Chad shores like GamborunNgala, Marte, Jere, among others. BornoState has a population of 5, 925, 668 according to the 2006 census and it has twenty-seven local governments across the state.

In the history of BornoState, the Kanem-Bornu Empire must be mentioned. Kanem-Borno Empire straddles across the Lake Chad region for nearly 1000 years after the fall of the Empire.The Kenemi dynasty gained control of the Borno Emirate in the early 19th century after the Fulani jihad of Usman danFodio. It was conquered by Rabeh in 1893. Borno was invaded by the British, French and Germans at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1902, the British officially incorporated Borno into Northern Nigeria Protectorate and established a new capital at Maiduguri called Yerwa in 1907, which remains the capital to this day.

When democracy returned to Nigeria after series of military coups in 1999,Alhaji (Late) Mala Kachalla was elected the governor of the state under the (APP) All Peoples Party later changed to (ANPP) All Nigeria Peoples Party. In 2003 Senator Ali Modu Sheriff was elected the governor of the state after defeating the incumbent governor Mala Kachalla forcing Mala Kachalla to decamp to AD. Senator Ali ModuSheriff was in power for two terms from 2003 to 2011, the period that Boko Haram crisis began. The crisis erupted specifically in 2009 (Muhammad&Msughter, 2018).

The Concept of Safety of Journalists

Safety of journalists is a trending concept that is getting wider acceptance among academics, practitioners and human rights organizations worldwide. Kenya Media Working Groups (2014) defines safety as freedom from risk or harm as a result of unintentional acts such as accidents, natural phenomena and illness. The UN Plan (2016) defines journalist's safety:

> As a broad category that extends from preventive, protective and pre-emptive measures, through combating impunity and promoting a social culture which cherishes freedom of expression and press freedom. Safety spans both online and offline worlds and solutions require informed action at global, national and local levels whilst at the same time responding to contextual specificities in each castigate (p. 14).

The leading international organizations that support and promote the issue of journalists' safety, according to Jennifer, Betz and Lisosky (2015), are International Press Freedom Organizations and UN bodies like UNESCO, the Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN General Assembly and the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, International News Safety Institute - INSI, Committee to Protection of Journalists - CPJ, Reporters Without Borders - RSF, International Freedom of Expression Exchange - IFEX, Inter-American Press Association - IAPA.

The reasons for the concern on journalists' safety is that if journalists are not safe, they would not perform their function well; hence, people would not know what they ought to know about the happeningsin the corridor of power and other private institutions. The consequence is that citizens will not make meaningful participation in governance and public discourse (Braimah, 2014). United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression has stated that an attack on a journalist is "an attack against the principles of transparency and accountability, as well as the right to hold opinions and to participate in public debates, which are essential for democracy." In essence, violence against a journalist is not only an attack on one particular victim, but on all members of the society (IACHR, 2013, p. 2). UNESCO (2013) observes three major reasons which necessitate care on the safety of journalists:

1. Unless journalists are safe and secure they cannot be expected to carry out their professional duties that enable the media to provide the public platform for the exchange of ideas, opinions and information.
2. Unpunished killings and violence lead to self-censorship – journalists come to believe that it is simply too dangerous to cover certain topics.
3. The high vulnerability of journalists to threats means that members of society at large do not feel that they themselves are safe to speak when they see a journalist attacked and especially when there is impunity for the attackers.

According to Committee to Protection for Journalists (CPJ) only nine (9) out of 245 cases (2006-2009) had led to a conviction. CPJ claims that in nine out of ten murders, no-one is held responsible or punished. Beckett (n.d.) gives example of one scenario thus:

> In 2006 Anna Politkovskaya was executed in her own apartment, apparently by contracted killers, probably as a consequence of her fearless inquiries in to corruption and human rights abuses in Russia. The international community was deeply shocked and pressure has now been put on Russian President Putin who has promised to bring her killers to justice. No one may ever be brought to book for these killings.(p. 5)

Organizations like Reporters Without Borders and International News Safety Institute led by UNESCO raised the alarm on this impunity and called for proper mechanism to end the practice. In 2012 United Nations adopted Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity with the aim of "creating a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers, both in conflict and non-conflict situations, with a view to strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide" (Jennifer et al., 2015, p. 14).In line with this, UNESCO dedicated a section in its Media Development Indicator (MDI) which deals with the question of journalist's safety across different parts of the world.

Safety of Journalists in Nigeria

Since 1986 when Dele Giwa was murdered, many journalists have equally met their deaths while practisingtheir profession. Examples are journalists like EnencheAkogwu of *Channels Television;* Ayo Ohu of *TheGuardian*; AbayomiOgundeji and Godwin Agbroko both of *This Day*; BagaudaKaltho of *The News*; TundeOladepo of *The Guardian* and a female journalist, BoladeFasasi, to mention but a few (Salau, 2016). According to International Press Centre ICP (2015), between July-September 2004 (two months) about 15 journalists were abducted by gunmen in which some ransom was paid while six (6) journalists were assaulted or stabbed by political thugs and police and their equipmentwas confiscated. Most of the perpetrators according to Unaegbu (2017) are security agents, political thugs, security details of government officials and unknown armed men.

Nigerian journalists never experienced endangerment from non-state actors as the one they have experienced fromBoko Haram. Pate and Idris (2017, p. 159) corroboratedthe foregoing view stating that "Indeed, at no other time had journalists experienced such high level of risks and faced dangers to their personal, professional and institutional safety in Nigeria as they did during the period 2009-2015". Journalists are exposed to attacks perpetrated by terrorists who do not appreciate the concept of journalism as well asthe military that see journalists as obstacles to the discharge of their duties. Due to these unsafe conditions, editorial staff and reporters themselves become more restrictive in sending people to or covering beats from these conflict regions, but instead rely on second-hand reports from security agents or 'acclaimed' eye witnesses on phone (Unaegbu, 2017, p. 175).

These uncontrolled attacks and violence negatively affect journalism practice in Nigeria. The most worrisome issue in this matter is that none of the suspected perpetrators was punished in all of the cases mentioned. Yusuf (cited in Unaegbu, 2017) established that most of the perpetrators are government officials and influential people who have the political power or financial power to corrupt the judicial process. Unaegbu(2017) further

suggested that the continuous and unresolved impunity against journalists results more from the lack of political will to enforce these frameworks and less from the absence of laws. Moreover, this complete lack of political will to act appropriately comes as little surprise, given that the phrase 'protect your own' holds.

One of the recent efforts towards providing safe environment for journalists in Nigeria is the creation of Nigerian Journalists' Safety Initiative (NJSI) launched by International Press Centre (IPC). Director of IPC Mr. LanreArogundade (cited in Salau, 2016) explains the vision and objectives of the Nigerian Journalists' Safety Initiative (NJSI) thus:

> Monitoring and documentation of attacks on journalists in Nigeria; running a safety alert and help desk for journalists under threat; creating better awareness about safety through online safety manual; capacity building and other forms of engagement with journalists and media outlets on safety of journalists; joint plans of action with relevant stakeholders on journalists safety; publishing of an annual compendium on the state of safety of journalists in Nigeria and holding of commemorative activities to mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (p. 2).

Empirical evidence by IDRC (2008) shows that one way to consider trauma during conflict is within a psychosocial framework which stresses the importance of thinking about conflict trauma from both the psychological and social perspectives. The term psychosocial attempts to express the recognition that there is always a close, ongoing circular interaction between an individual's psychological state and his social environment (Bergh &Jareg cited in Agger, 2001, p.307). Apparently, the psychosocial approach demands that people can think about how social conditions relate to mental health.

IMS (2019) findings show that95 per cent of journalists killed in armed conflict are locally based journalists (UN News, 2015). While there has been increasing focus on the physical and digital safety issues these journalists face, there has been less attention

towards the need for psychosocial support. Addressing psychosocial needs of local journalists must become a higher priority to better provide for their well-being as they are impacted by psychologically traumatizing events happening around them. The context of local journalists in covering such events is very different from their international correspondent colleagues. The studyexamined the challenges surrounding psychosocial issues as part of the holistic theme of safety of journalists. The findings showhow journalists, particularly war correspondents, are affected by the work they do. The findings also shows that there has been little examination of the effects on local journalists or fixers for international media who live and work covering violence, conflicts or disasters that impact them directly.

McGoldrick (2008) studiedpsychological effects of war journalism and peace journalism. The study used in-depth interviews with a group of UK professionals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including both women and men. In each case, subjects watched two versions of the same story, reported in a television news format and produced in the war journalism and peace journalism styles. The study used qualitative approach, in which interviews are conducted according to a Grounded Theory method and results categorised and processed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The results suggest that war journalism triggers more and more serious negative psychological feelings than peace journalism.The study also found measurable negative psychological responses to watching television news per se, without differentiation into war journalism and peace journalism.

A study by Fournier (2014) observed that the future of the safety of journalists in armed conflict should be a continuation in the present focus of the combination of raising awareness for less impunity and practical assistance. This is because, according to Yusuf (2013), those who have made journalists object of target and harassmentsare never brought to book. She contended that the public were made to believe that all cases are being investigated, yet none has been convicted for murder or attack on journalists. For her, this is what is in vogue in many countries which is why

the global community is advocating an end to impunity as well as the promotion of safety among journalists.

Sallie and Mireya (2015) in their study used national survey of journalists working in 136 media outlets, randomly selected to reflect the national news media landscape. The research aimed atcontributing to knowledge on the impact of violence on journalism in Mexico, and the general condition of journalists working in an unsafe context globally. The population of the study consisted of 377 professional journalists that were selected within the country.
The findings of the study showed that while almost all journalists reported paying greater attention to accuracy when a story was potentially sensitive, about two-thirds of the journalists within the scope of the research 67% reported having engaged in self-censorship as a precaution to reduce risk. Result also shows that journalists' retirement from street reporting is the next most prevalent measure. 64% had engaged in this behaviourfollowed by adherence to company censorship policies which constituted 57:3%. Two more precautionary measures followed in frequency as revealed by the study: hiding information from suspicious or untrustworthy people in the respondent's own newsroom 50% and publishing without byline or credit in one's own media outlets.

Pate andIdris (2016) identified the following as the major threats faced by journalists covering North East Nigeria: murder, death threats, attacks on media houses, detention and imprisonment, confiscation of print and harassment from security agencies and so on. Besides external threats, Pate andIdris identified certain internal abuses that threatenthe safety of journalists such as lack of safety training, safety kit, poor salary and inducement. Despite these challenges the journalists use their talentsto develop some survival tactics: identity concealment, balance reporting, networks of sources and avoidance of dangerous spots.

Wilson (2009) states that journalists working in conflict zones like the North East and politically volatile areas remain highly vulnerable to attacks without investigations or arrest of

perpetrators, except for condemnations that usually follow from the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the most visible media pressure group. The above empirical reviews are relevant to this study as such studies examined safety issues of journalists covering conflict zones in different countries and continents which have direct bearing to the subject under investigation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the Cultural Theory of Conflict and Diversity and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Model.Cultural Theory of Conflict and Diversity identifies social difference, particularly cultural, as the main factor that creates a social identity and social exclusion thereby creating "we" against "them" feeling which nurtures animosity; hatred and contemptuous relationship among people of divergent cultures leading to conflict; how the competing interests of groups tie conflict directly into the social, economic, and political organizations of society as well as the nature and strength of social networks within and between community groups (Ademola, 2005).

The culturally induced conflict that this relationship cultivates is as a result of creation of the enemy image which is learned from early stage of growth to adulthood and is passed on from generation to generation. An example is seen in the case of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. The theory believes that different forms of identities in various societies exist; however, the one that has ethnic origin is the most dangerous identity and the one that most explains violent conflicts. Psycho-cultural theory of conflict argues that conflict is avoidable when tolerance and understanding among people of different races, culture, languages, and histories are established. The theory however becomes relevant as it addresses the feeling which nurtures animosity, hatred and contemptuous relationship among people of divergent cultures leading to conflict.

The theory is apt to this study because of the violent extremism in the Northeast and the traumatic condition such conflicts create to journalists covering conflict in the Northeast of Nigeria.The assumption of the theory becomes imperative to this study which is

borne out of the realization that in a mix where “diverse people” meet, most especially as a result of social and geographical contacts, a culture shock is produced. Thus, the politicization or poor mediation of diversity could produce shocks that can explode into social conflict with devastating consequences.

On the other hand, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a common psychological consequence of exposure to trauma, particularly situations that threaten the safety or integrity of self or loved ones. A wide range of traumatic situations has been associated with PTSD: combat situations, natural and man-made disasters, accidental injury, physical or sexual assault and serious medical illnesses and their treatment. PTSD consists of three distinctive groups of symptoms: experiencing the traumatic event, avoidance of reminders of the event.These symptoms should be present for at least one month and should cause significant impairment in social and occupational functioning (IMS, 2019). The course of PTSD is variable, with some studies finding a favourable outcome and low rates of chronicity; however, long-term studies have found that at least half of journalists initially diagnosed with PTSD continue to experience symptoms after several years. Chronic PTSD is associated with marked impairments in social and occupational functioning and is often associated with other mental disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders and substance use disorders. A variety of factors have been associated with the development or persistence of PTSD following a traumatic exposure: these include female gender, preexisting psychopathology and the nature and severity of the exposure.

One potential predictor of PTSD is the appearance of initial PTSD, like symptoms following exposure to trauma. These symptoms, sometimes referred to as acute stress disorder (ASD), do not qualify for a diagnosis of PTSD unless they persist for over a month. Not all individuals who experience ASD are diagnosed with PTSD in the long term but severe ASD, particularly associated with high levels of hyperarousal, is associated with the subsequent emergence of PTSD. With this in mind, a variety of

psychological interventions have been designed both to address these acute symptoms and to prevent the future development of PTSD; however, the efficacy of these interventions has been questioned and they may not be easily available in certain settings. Recognition of these facts, as well as advances in understanding the biology of PTSD, has led to trials of various pharmacological agents immediately following a traumatic exposure to reduce the occurrence or severity of subsequent PTSD (IMS, 2019). In this study, these approaches and the evidence for their efficacy are reviewed.

PTSD risk factor research indicated that the individual's subjective experience during traumatic events plays a significant role in differentiating between those who develop PTSD and those who do not (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000). The way individuals cognitively process these experiences is a part of this subjective experience. A PTSD model may be employed to help explain differences in these subjective experiences. While it is important to discern local conceptualizations of psychological distress, it is even more important to create treatment modalities and ways of managing psychological distress which are cultural and context specific (Batchelder, 2014). Indeed, current mainstream psychosocial efforts are by and large formulated for Western journalists with a "lack of work formulating best practices to assist journalists who are locally employed and live at the location of a large scale traumatic incident and whose experience of the event is different from an outsider whose primary trauma is vicarious in nature" (Beighley, 2017). The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2018) describes the need for cultural sensitivity and gives more detailed and structured information about cultural concepts of distress. For example, the manual suggests that uncontrollable crying and headaches are symptoms of panic attacks in some cultures, while difficulty breathing may be the primary symptom in other cultures (American Psychological Association, 2013).

The nexus between PTSD Modeland the study hinges on the fact the individual's subjective experience during traumatic events

plays a significant role in differentiating between those who develop PTSD and those who do not which makes the theories to be apt to this study.

Methodology

The study used qualitative method and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach. IPA is an approach thatis deployed to explore individuals or social groups' perception, account of events or state as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record of the events or state. Thus, the method is a holistic approach to the construction of philosophical social sciences of consciousness and identity through experiences. Most IPA is conducted using intensive qualitative research approach such as in-depth interview (Baran& Davis, 2012).

The population of this study is comprised of journalists covering conflict in BornoState. This covered those that are based in the state and those that report from outside the state and have frequent visits to the State. The total number of journalists covering conflict in BornoState, according to National Union of Journalists (2020) register,was 68. Therefore, the NUJ register served as the sampling frame for this study. The study used purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique. In non-probability sampling, members of the research population do not have equal chance of participation and it is applying for qualitative research, thus it determines a sample size for the chosen methodology.

The sample size for the in-depth interview is 10 respondents. The study used the NUJ registrar (sampling frame) to select the respondents for the study. The 10 respondents were selected based on their working experience and seniority in the area of the study and the criterion is based on journalists covering conflict in Borno State for a period of five years.

Findings and Discussions

The following are the findings and discussions based on the research objectives. Research objective one is to analyse the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State.

Psychological Safety:
In answering this question, all the respondents agreed that psychological safety of journalists is a major concern all over the world. The psychological safety identified by the respondents is "psychological trauma". According to the respondents, trauma occurs when a journalist has a physical or mental reaction to a stressful event that affects their sympathetic nervous system.When this occurs, journalists have difficulties in concentrating, disruption of sleep, and unusual irritability thoughts related to event intruding at unwanted times.

Respondent onestates thatpsychologicalsafety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State is a major concern of journalists in the area. He maintains thatjournalists covering conflict in the state are being traumatisedby constant engagement into conflict beat. All the respondents admit that psychological safety of journalists in the statemust be a big priority among media houses that send out journalists to the area, because once the journalists are psychological unstable; it will affect the news gathering process andnews content because covering trauma can generate another kind of trauma.

From the above submission, it is apparent that psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in the state must remain a big priority to media houses. In the course of the interview, some of the journalists covering conflict in the state admit that most of them are psychologically unstable as a result of endless conflicts that aretaking place on daily basis in Borno State. Similarly, some of the respondents are of the view that most of the organisations they are working for are not doing enough regarding psychological safety of journalists and this is a very big challenge to journalists in the state.

This perhaps explains the reason why IDRC (2008) established that one way to consider trauma during conflict is within a psychosocial framework which stresses the importance of thinking about conflict trauma from both the psychological and social

perspectives. Psychosocial attempts to express the recognition that there is always a close, ongoing circular interaction between an individual's psychological state and his social environment. Apparently, the psychosocial approach demands that people can think about how social conditions relate to mental health.

McGoldrick (2008) alsostudiedpsychological effects of war journalism and peace journalism. The results suggest that war journalism triggers more and more serious negative psychological feelings than peace journalism.The study also found measurable negative psychological responses to watching television news per se, without differentiation into war journalism and peace journalism. The findings also validate the theoretical assumption of Psycho-cultural theory of conflict which argues that conflict is avoidable when tolerance and understanding among people of different races, culture, languages and histories are established in order to avoid this kind of traumatic situation as well as the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder which is hinged on a common psychological consequence of exposure to trauma, particularly situations that threaten the safety or integrity of self or loved ones.

Research objective two is to examine the relevance of psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State.

Relevance of Psychological Safety of Journalists

From the interviews, the respondents admit that the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in the state is relevant.The reasons put forward by respondent three are summarised thus:

> To be honest with you, I am highly impressed for this development of conducting a study on the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State. As a journalist covering conflict in the state, sometimes I am psychologically demoralised by looking at the casualties. This often affects my news writing, as the scenes of such circumstances kept reflecting in my head.At times, I don't

even eat for days because of the horrible scenes in the conflict zones.

Psychological safety according to the respondents is very relevant and significant in journalism profession. This is so because journalists need to be alive andsafe so that they can carry out their professional duties and obligation of informing the society on conflict issues effectively. Once journalists are psychologically stable, their contribution in managing conflict through proper and objective reporting will go a long way in alleviating conflict in Borno State.

All the respondents agreed that psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in the state is significant. They maintain that carrying out a study on the psychological safety of journalists in the state is a welcome development. They also pray that the media houses in Nigeria should be able to learn from the outcome of this study so that proper attention will be given to journalists covering conflict zones. From the above submission, it is apparent that the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in the state is relevant and significant.

The findings are similar to that of IMS (2019) that95 per cent of journalists killed in armed conflict are locally based journalists. While there has been increasing focus on the physical and digital safety issues these journalists face, there has been less attention towards the need for psychosocial support. Addressing psychosocial needs of local journalists must become a higher priority to better provide for their wellbeing as they are impacted by psychologically traumatizing events happening around them. The context of local journalists in covering such events is very different from their international correspondent colleagues. The studyexamined the challenges surrounding psychosocial issues as part of the holistic theme of safety of journalists. The findings also revealed how journalists, particularly war correspondents are affected by the work they do.

This also explains the reason why Pate andIdris (2016) identified the following as the major threats faced by journalists covering North East Nigeria: murder, death threats, attacks on media houses, detention and imprisonment, confiscation of print and harassment from security agencies and so on. Therefore, analysing the psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in Borno State is relevant and significant. This validates the PTSD Model on the premise of individual's subjective experience during traumatic events which plays a significant role in differentiating between those who develop PTSD and those who do not.

Research objective three is to identifythechallenges facing journalists covering conflict in Borno State.

Challenges of the Psychological Safety

According the respondents, the challenges are many but the ones they were able to identify include: difficulties in concentrating on a story, unusual isolation or withdrawal from peer groups or social situation, disruption of sleep, high level of thinking, increase in self-medication, etc.

Difficulties in concentrating on a story: The respondents established that, most of the time, journalists covering conflict in the state find it difficult to concentrate on a story. Most of the journalists are psychological unstable and this affects the way they write their story. Respondent two states that "difficulties in concentrating normally make me to drop some stories; I do have issues with my boss because of this".

Unusual isolation or withdrawal from peer groups or social situation: According to the respondents, unusual isolation is another challenge that makesjournalists to stay alone and avoid social situations. Respondent six remarks that "because of constant engagement with conflict situations, sometimes it makes me isolate myself from people, as I kept thinking and asking myself, when will this end?"

Disruption of sleep: According to respondent nine, "There was a time I didn't sleep for three days after a bomb detonated at 5 p.m.

on a crowded bridge in the market town of Gamboru that leads into neighboring Cameroon where 30 people were killed. Corroborating this position, respondent ten said, “the same thing happened to me when twin blast occurred at University of Maiduguri, I didn’t sleep on that day”.

All the respondents agreed that the preceding challenges highlighted above constitute some of the major issues affecting journalists covering conflict in the state. This could be the reason why Wilson (2009) states that journalists working inBorno and other politically volatile areas remain highly vulnerable to attacks without investigations or arrest of perpetrators, except for condemnations that usually follow from the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the most visible media pressure group.

Research objective four is to address the identified challenges facing journalists covering conflict in Borno State.

Measures to address the identified challenges

The measures to address the identified challenges include:

a. Training of journalists on psychological safety: According to respondent five, “this will help journalists to learn the basic concepts of psychological care through a series of exercises as part of basic training and share experience of other journalists.
b. Support from media organisations: Respondent seven remarks that “media organisations should include clear safety protocol for journalists as part of their institutional capacity and framework and also the need for them to increase psychological support for journalists in ensuring their continued safety while they administer their work”. For example, respondent four states,“when I came back from covering conflicts, I had long talks with my editor-in-chief.; I had free days to rest and recover with my family. If I had suffered any kind of post-traumatic stress, I could count on the help of my newspaper.”
c. Journalists should create a self-care plan: According to respondent eight, “apart from support from media organisations, journalists must also learn how to protect

themselves by taking proper care of their psychological safety by constant checkup when the need arises.

All the respondents agreed that the identified measures can go a long way to addressing the challenges of psychological safety of journalists covering conflict in the state. Respondent ten also stressed the need for "media organizations to be paying journalists their salaries and other entitlements as at when due". The respondents are of the view that if these measures are put into positive consideration, some of the challenges highlighted above may be alleviated to some extent if not completely.

Based on the tenets of PTSD Model, it is therefore important to discern local conceptualizations of psychological distress.It is even more important to create treatment modalities and ways of managing psychological distress which are culture and context specific.

Conclusion

This study analysed the psychology of journalists covering conflict in Borno State.Some journalists covering conflict in the State were selected for in-depth interview and they responded to some questions raised by the study. Going by the findings, it is apparent that carrying out a psychological analysis of journalists covering conflict in thestateis significant. Based on the findings, psychological trauma is a major problem with journalists covering conflict in the state. Apparently, difficulties in concentrating on a story, unusual isolation or withdrawal from peer groups or social situations, disruption of sleep and high level of thinking constitute major challenges to journalists covering conflict in Borno State. Similarly, training of journalists on psychological safety, support from media organisations as well as journalists' self-care plan are measures that can be used to address the identified challenges in the state. Therefore, the study concludes thatpsychological safety of journalists in the statemattersbecause there should be no story that is worth the trauma or blood, not to talk of the life of a journalist in the state.

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