

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE (KAP) OF DIGITAL SAFETY AMONG ONLINE JOURNALISTS IN KANO STATE

LAURATU UMAR ABDULSALAM (PH.D.)

INTRODUCTION

- The digital age has brought many improvements to journalism, but it has also brought numerous challenges, such as online threats and harassment that can lead to emotional harm or even the death of journalists.
- Henrichsen, et al.(2015) observe that 37 of the 276 journalists killed between 2011 and 2013 worked online and employed digital tools.
- Similarly, 44 out of the 70 journalists who were killed in 2013 were online journalists, and 50% of the journalists who were imprisoned in 2013 were online journalists as well (CPJ, 2013).
- In Nigeria, serial hacking of journalists' computers and websites has become a rising trend.
- Likewise, there are digital tracking and monitoring tools that violate journalists' freedom of expression and privacy rights in ways that go above and beyond what is permitted by international law. However, despite the dangers of the digital age, many journalists continue their work unconcerned about such risks.

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- The general concept of the safety of journalists has become a worldwide concern. The rise of safety issues is a result of the events of the Cold War. This shift refocused the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the issue of press freedom. This aims to reduce state influence on the media, increase civil society recognition, and increase private media.
 - This resulted in the Windhoek conference on "Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press" in 1991, which united independent journalists from Africa and evolved the system for media development indicators such as democratic performance of media institutions, legal and regulatory environment, and economic structure of the media sector (Berger, 2017).
 - UNESCO is a key United Nations agency with the responsibility for "Press Freedom" and "Freedom of Expression". It has led the charge in the combat for journalists' safety. It put the "United Nations Plan of Action" on Journalist's Safety Journalist and Impunity into action in 2012 (UNESCO, 2016).

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- Risks for media personnel can arise from a variety of causes, such as wars, civil unrest, gunfire, and hit squads. Furthermore, news organizations, particularly in impoverished countries, cannot afford to provide journalists with protective equipment such as safety training, legal counsel, and flak jackets; other organizations lack critical education and other resources (Clark, 2016).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- This study aims to evaluate the knowledge, practice, and attitude of Kano state journalists towards digital safety. The objectives are:
 1. To understand the level of knowledge of digital safety among online journalists in Kano State.
 2. To find out the attitude of online journalists in Kano State towards digital safety,
 3. To examine the cases of digital safety threats experienced by online journalists in Kano state.
 4. To know the digital safety mechanisms deployed by online journalists in Kano State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- This study adopted the Protection Motivation Theory.
- This theory was selected because of its strength in explaining the phenomenon under investigation.
- The protection motivation theory was first proposed by Ronald W. Rogers in 1975. The theory helps people comprehend fear appeals and how people can deal with them.
- The theory assumes that fear appeal consists of three components: the magnitude of noxiousness of a depicted event; the probability of that event's occurrence; and the efficacy of a protective response.
- Each of these communication factors sets in motion related cognitive assessment processes that act as a mediator for attitude change (Rogers, 1975).

METHODOLOGY

- A quantitative research approach was utilized as a means to generate data for this study; a survey was chosen as the method. The survey was chosen because it helps in understanding people's (online journalists') opinions as well as how events should be interpreted, and more specifically, because surveys, as a tool for addressing problems, are centred on people and their perspectives on issues in order to learn more.
- The population of this study were all members of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Kano State Chapter.
- Journalists from Kano state were chosen as the population because they meet a national standard of practice for journalists. It is also an organization that represents journalists who work in print, electronic, and new media.
- According to the NUJ, as of January 2019, there were around 754 registered journalists in Kano State (NUJ, 2022).
- The study selected a sample of 254 respondents drawn from a population of 754 Kano State journalists. A questionnaire was used to collect data about the journalists. The survey questions had 12 questions divided into four sections. 210 of the 254 respondents who were sampled returned the copies of the questionnaire. Also, out of the 210 responses that were returned, some questions were left unanswered. The responses were analysed and discussed in line with the objectives of the study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Findings of the study show youths dominate the online journalism space. Most of the respondents were within the age range of 21 to 40.
- Findings also show that majority of the online journalists in Kano state are aware of digital safety of journalists
- The study also found that large proportion of media organizations in Kano state do not train their journalists on digital safety.
- Also, the research reveals that high percentage of the study sample are aware of digital threats. Similarly, majority of these journalists have experienced online threats.
- Intimidation and harassment online are the most dominant form of online threats experienced by journalists in Kano state and it is mostly targeted at female journalists.
- The leading mechanism used by the online journalists studied is strong password. Most of the respondents relied heavily on changing password time to time and ensuring the passwords have varieties of characters to be protected online.

CONCLUSION

- Digital safety of journalists is now an important issue in our societies. This is because our societies are experiencing digital penetration and, in some years, to come now, everything will eventually be digitized.
- As such, the topic of digital safety of journalists must be put into consideration. Journalists should be provided with the necessary online safety measures needed to implement their duties smoothly.
- Journalists can evaluate unsafe circumstances and take the necessary precautions with the appropriate training.
- The right reporting avenue and recording system must be in place to ensure that threats and intimidation against journalists are investigated and used for advocacy.
- By doing so, safety of journalists in our societies will be ensured and improved. Journalists will be guaranteed a safe online and offline environment to conduct their duties without any fear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Journalists should be given the professional training and tools they need to protect themselves online.
- Investigate and punish those who attack journalists to ensure they are held accountable which will help to prevent other online scammers or attackers from attacking journalists.
- Organizations should fund in professional training of journalist, particularly in terms of digital safety for reporters reporting dangerous situations.
- As they carry out their responsibilities, journalists should abide by their code of ethics and conduct to gain the respect and credibility of the public they serve.