Exploring the pattern of violence against Journalists in Nigeria.

By

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Abstract

Journalists are exposed to violence and attacks of different kinds while carrying out their jobs. Some of the attacks are injurious, life-threatening, and threaten the freedom of the press and the profession in general. This research, Studied the patterns, forms, Causes, and agents of violence against a journalist and how to promote journalist safety from such attacks. The study adopted an in-depth interview. Results showed that violence against journalists in Osun State takes the political pattern. Findings also showed that the forms that these attacks take are Physical, emotional, and moral. Findings also revealed the perceived danger of unveiling truth by the journalist as the primary cause of violence against a journalist. The study found that security officers and politicians, with the aid of thugs, carry out violent acts against journalists. The study further exposed the need for strategic ways to curb violence against a journalist. The study thus recommends more orientation for journalists on measures to help them avoid attacks and enact laws to back the swift punishment of agents of violence against journalists.

Keywords: Violence, Journalist, Attacks, Safety and Pattern of Violence.

Introduction

Every profession has its peculiarities in carrying out their day-to-day activities. Educating and informing the public about what is going on around them is the

goal of public information collecting and distribution for the journalist. In carrying out these duties, journalists and indeed the media get attacked. The impunity for these violations and abuses is one of the most significant challenges to freedom of expression worldwide" (Article 19, 2019, p. 4). Apart from the socio-political environments in which journalists work, there are concerns about the adequacy of safety journalists (Asogwa, Ogodo & Ibe 2021).

Consequently, the Nigerian Constitution includes the media as one of the officially recognised institutions in the country. As the number of journalists killed in Nigeria continues to rise, the situation is becoming increasingly frightening. Attacks on journalists contradict the provisions of the Constitution, which guarantee press freedom. So, for example, section 22 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria declares that all media outlets in Nigeria are free to maintain the essential objectives of chapter 2 of that Constitution and uphold the government's duty of openness and transparency toward its citizens (Nigeria 1999). However, it is no surprise that Marcesse (2017) asserts that safe journalism practice is challenging in contemporary times. According to the International News Safety Institute (INSI), 111 media workers died in 2015 and another 115 in 2016, supported by the facts. Since 1992, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), two thousand and twelve journalists have been killed.

Meanwhile, reports claim 1010 journalists got killed between 2006 and 2017; of this number, 99 were killed in 2018 alone (UNESCO, 2019). Reports from UNESCO (2019) and Article 19 (2019) paint a picture of intimidation, threat, harassment, and ultimately, death of journalists across the world. In 2021 alone, two international watchdog organisations recorded 45 and 46 respectively as the number of journalists killed in one year. Although seen as the lowest ever tally, the European Union, on the other hand, claimed to have recorded 150 media attacks and violence in Nigeria in four years between 2016-2020.

To Cottle (2017), Journalists have now become mere numbers in death statistics worldwide, thereby making the prevalent threat to journalists across all environments of journalism practice alarming. Statistics show that many journalists and media workers killed are not in a war or conflict situation, meaning impunity is felt more in peaceful societies (Carlsson & Poyhtari, 2017). The security

and safety challenges confronting journalists are increasing every day. In countries where peace reigns, but when journalists report on egregious crimes against humanity, such as drug trafficking, human rights abuses, corruption, and sexual harassment, they are the most likely targets (Dunham, Nelson & Aghekyan, 2015; Ola 2020).

Meanwhile, UNESCO's (2021) study shows that journalists are more likely to self-censor in constant danger. Threats can cause journalists to shift their focus to less politically charged areas or quit their jobs altogether. They also submit a correlation between the level of terror felt by media workers and their ability to provide high-quality reporting. Historically, violence aimed at journalists is traceable to military rule or a dictatorship, where the media is gagged. However, this is also evident in democracies today, where the media faces all kinds of threats from the government and non-state actors (Pate, 2018). Much violence has gone wrong without sanctions; for example, according to data from the UNESCO 2021 study, 87% of those responsible for the murder of a journalist will go free. There are ample studies that cover the area of violence against journalists in Nigeria. Few like Unaebegu (2017) analysed these challenges concerning gender others like Asogwa, Ogodo & Ibe (2021), & Chinweobo-Onuoha, Tunca, Talabi, Aiyesimoju, Adefemi, & Gever (2021) observed the safety of journalists. Thus it is against this backdrop that this research addresses the dearth of literature in the area of the patterns violence against journalist take.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the pattern of violence against journalists in Osun state.
2. To examine the causes of violence against journalists in Osun state.
3. To determine the perpetrators of violence against journalists in Osun state.
4. To find out how journalists in Osun state promote safety against violence.

Literature Review

Journalism

A journalist is a person who works in journalism. A journalist gathers news and writes about it for newspapers, magazines, television, or radio. Press freedom is the right of citizens to know what is going on in the world. With the emergence of radio, television, and the internet in the twentieth century, journalism was

enlarged to include any printed and electronic communication dealing with current affairs (Ola 2020).
Professionalism grew in journalism in the twentieth century. As a result of this trend, journalists' sense of social duty has grown, as has their sense of organisation (Mitchell 2019).

Violence

A person or thing is harmed, damaged, or abused due to the use of either mental or physical force (Weigert, 2010). Similarly, violence can be defined as an act, an attitude, or a system that causes physical, psychological, social, or environmental harm and prevents people from achieving their full potential (Kathleen, 2007). Even when violence conveys one's feelings, it is often used for a specific goal and is used at the most extreme levels in conflict situations. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines victims of violence as those who intentionally use or threaten to use physical force and power against themselves, another human being or a group of people to inflict pain, death, psychological harm, or deprivation on others.

Violence against journalists

A lack of understanding and a restricted definition of violence against journalists or the press as a whole persists. There has been a long history of attacks on journalists. It has been present for a long time in various forms: harsh criticism of journalism, media buildings being plundered and destroyed, and journalists being used as negotiating chips or as a tool of exerting pressure in times of war. Violence against local journalists in conflict zones, such as drug trafficking, organised crime, or illicit economic and political activities, should not be overshadowed by the media attention given to war correspondents (Ola, 2020). It is documented, catalogued, and denounced when citizens and institutions use violence against journalists. Additionally, numerous studies have been on the varying degrees of violence in the Middle East, North America, and Europe (Ola, 2020).

News has always been a sphere of conflict, and one finds violence at every point in news history. Although violence, in general. The forms that violence takes come and go corresponding to rising and falling levels of general violence within and

between societies and changes in the social and political roles of the news media, and developing norms for journalism.

Between April 29 and May 3, 1991, UNESCO, other UN agencies, and some African journalists gathered in Windhoek, Namibia, to discuss the role of a free, independent, and pluralistic media because of the continual challenges and violence encountered by media professionals working in Africa at the time. It nevertheless implies a significant role for governments within the constraints of freedom, pluralism, and independence. It tries to ensure that states safeguard journalists and advance chances for citizens to express themselves freely while avoiding state media dominance or monopoly. The Windhoek approach on pluralism also stresses states supporting public service and community media legally and practically (Ojo, Salau, Aikulola & Onyedika-Ugoeze 2020).

The Nature of Assaults on Journalists

The media operate in an unexpected climate, where most journalists have turned political. Those who hold truth to power are a minority, making them targets of harassment and attack. There is a significant distinction between the urban 'stringers' and the rural 'truth-tellers'; both face considerable violence because they operate in situations where the rule of law has been undermined. The writ of feudal and political power is extensive and intense (Thomas, 2017).

According to a 2016 study by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), no one has been held accountable for the murders of 27 journalists killed while doing their jobs and exposing government wrongdoing since 1992. Small town journalists Jagendra Singh, Umesh Rajput, and Akshay Singh have been murdered, and the cultures of impunity that shield the criminals have been highlighted in this article. As a result of physical violence and misogyny, women journalists, particularly those working in rural and conflict zones, are subjected to severe harassment off and online.

According to Marino (2013), the most extreme type of censorship is the murder of journalists and media personnel. In Marino (2013), the Inter-American Court of Human Rights stated that "journalism may only be practised freely when individuals who carry out this job are not victims of threats or physical, mental, or

moral attacks or other forms of harassment." Infringing on the individual's right to freedom of thought and expression and the collective dimension of this right is a particularly heinous crime. Inflicting harm on journalists or media workers because of their jobs violates their rights and the general public's rights and societies to be informed and receive any information or views they desire (Ola 2020).

Protecting journalists from violence

Journalists must feel protected in order to carry out their duties. According to Burleson & Thoron (2017), a person's ability to concentrate and expand their business is strongly influenced by the level of safety and tranquillity in their immediate surroundings. According to Maslow's hierarchy of wants, a person's second most crucial need, according to Chinweobo-Onuoha et al. (2021). Journalists need to be protected in order to accomplish their duties effectively. According to Oketunji (2014), workers' performance might be affected by their safety. Both employees and employers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their workers. To fulfil their social obligation of spreading information, journalists, according to Murthy (2018), require a safe working environment.

Authorities can take various measures to safeguard journalists' safety and, by extension, freedom of speech and the press. Media freedom and democracy depend on governments adequately investigating murders and other significant violent crimes against journalists; investigations should be carried out immediately and efficiently. According to Benitez (2017, cited in Hammarberg, 2011), essential areas are:

i. Murders and other significant violent crimes against journalists must be swiftly and thoroughly investigated by governments serious about media freedom and democracy.
ii. Politicians and government officials require a higher level of public criticism and scrutiny. Public and media response to criticism from them should be mature and non-violent.
iii. People who prosecute and investigate crimes must be on their own and have the right skills for the job. They should not be stopped from doing their job by politics.

iv. It is essential for police and security officers to protect journalists from harm. There should be much thought put into threats. Every time, the Court in Strasbourg has said that the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2) says that the State must not only not kill people intentionally and unlawfully but also take steps to protect the lives of people in its care.

Empirical studies

Academe tends to view attacks on journalists as verbal, psychological, or physical intimidation, according to Brambila & Hughes (2019). This study fills a gap in the literature by conceptualising journalist violence from an industry perspective.

Global trends in online violence against women journalists by Posetti et al. (2021) found that 73% of women journalists polled have been threatened, intimidated, or insulted online in connection with their employment. Posetti et al. (2021) observed that journalists had been abused in numerous circumstances and countries.

Asogwa, Ogodo, and Ibe (2021) studied Nigerian journalists' knowledge, attitudes, and practices on security and COVID-19 in Nigeria. They polled 305 reporters. Most Nigerian journalists believe job loss and threat to life are the most severe safety challenges confronting them. The study found that over half of respondents had no basic safety training, and those who did were primarily self-funded, with some NGO sponsorship (NGOs). Also, almost all respondents think classroom safety training does not meet the demands of Nigerian journalists. Some utilise self-censorship to protect themselves from violent attacks and obscure their identities. Finally, the investigation found that the Nigerian government was not adequately protecting journalists.

In a Dart Centre survey of 247 journalists across the world, carried out by Slaughter, Brummel, Drevo, & Newman (2017 p. 67), it was reported that the cost of training for journalists remains a "significant barrier to access. Only 57% of journalists reported their employers paid their training". The rest, " 9% paid from their pockets while 33% relied on charitable organisations". The inadequacy of training is apparent. The survey concluded that "many journalists' safety training is not current".

On the magnitude of the threat to journalists, Unaegbu (2017) found that 74% of the journalists in Nigeria have faced threats in their work. A media study in Kenya by Wasserman & Madrid-Morale (2019) found that 91% of the journalists have faced security threats; 41% from politicians, 34% from organised groups, 8% from people in business, 4% from employers, and 3% from organised goons and religious groups. Pukalis & Harrison (2018) observed widespread impunity in the treatment of journalists in Bulgaria, DR Congo, India, Mexico, and Pakistan. As a result of the legal obligation to protect journalists, most crimes against journalists are committed by law enforcement and government officers. For example, "41% of attacks on journalists in 2015 were by public officials, a ratio that has remained stable since 2009, including police, troops, and state or local officials" (Article 19, 2016, 141).

According to Unaegbu (2017), the Global Impunity against Journalist Index (GIAJI) ranks Nigeria 13th in the world and 3rd in Africa. Nigeria is only better than Somalia and South Sudan because both are in war situations. Also, data from International Press Council (2015) show that between November 2014 and April 2015, 47 journalists were attacked in Nigeria. Those killed include Famous Gioboro of Glory FM, Rivers State, Lawrence Okojie of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), and Ikechukwu Onubogu of Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS). Harassment of journalists is common in Nigeria. The harassment of journalists has been compounded by COVID-19 and the current devastating insecurity in the country. Journalists can enhance their safety through their knowledge, attitude, and practices (KAP), but Chinweobo-Onuoha et al. (2021) found that Nigerian journalists lack training in safety skills.

Unaebegu (2017) examined gender disparities among media workers. To do so, the researcher used primary data from journalist interviews. Among the obstacles journalists confront include was sexual and gender-based attacks. They also found intimidation and arrest as obstacles to journalism. The study found that sexual harassment was rarely reported, and when reported, nothing is done, thus making victims not come forward.

In a survey, Chinweobo-Onuoha et al. (2021) concluded that journalists covering the END SARS protests experienced emotional trauma, physical attacks and

threats. They also found that journalists used self-censorship and selective appearance to cope with attacks. This present study project will bridge a methodological gap by using qualitative research to uncover methods journalists might protect themselves.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the Theory of Social Responsibility was employed. The theory emphasises responsibility with freedom. When a journalist is attacked, it limits the media's ability to act as watchdogs.

Social responsibility theory

The theory was made famous by the press freedom commission in the US called Hutchins. Robert Hutchins, Henry Luce's publisher, led the commission. The commission's purpose was to assess the US's freedom of expression. Their critical 1947 report coined the term "Social." That freedom comes with responsibility, and the press, which has specific privileges under the State, must account to society for its fundamental duty (Okunna & Omenugha 2012). According to McQuail (2010), the media are responsible to society, should be objective, fair, and accurate, and be free but self-regulatory. Others include the media following established rules of ethics and conduct and the government protecting the public interest.

The idea also measures and balance media practitioners' excesses caused by too much freedom. Just as the Constitution and the FOI Act (in Nigeria) offer freedom for journalistic endeavours, they are expected to be responsible for carrying out their duties. In the context of violence against the journalist, this ideology obstructs freedom. The notion holds that the press is rational to report with the public's interest and social responsibility. Thus, there is no reason for the media or journalists to be silenced through attacks or assaults on the job that will amount to infringement of the freedom as stated by the theory.

Methodology

This study used qualitative research. Wimmer & Dominick (2003) emphasise three crucial aspects of qualitative research. The authors state that qualitative research is an interpretative study that believes in fundamental human distinctions and strives for depth rather than breadth. The study used the interview as a qualitative

research approach. The interview allows academics to collect qualitative data about journalist violence in Osun. The researcher used open-ended questions to allow participants to express their views on the study's issue. Six NUJ-registered journalists in Osun were chosen for an interview, but only four agreed. They were chosen for their personal and professional expertise. The interviews were performed in English, face-to-face, with full participant permission, and lasted between 15 and 25 minutes. Participants' qualitative data were transcribed and processed according to research goals.

Table 1: interview context of participants

Respondent	Media	locality
2 Journalist	Print (National)	Oshogbo
1 Journalist	Radio (Local)	Oshogbo
1 Journalist	Television(Local)	Oshogbo

Source: Research survey (2023)

Discussion of Findings

All respondents agreed on the patterns of violence against journalists, especially in Osun state. All participants believed that violence against journalists takes the form of events covered by the journalist. They also agree that the journalist is prone to face political violence for Osun state. This finding agrees with the claims of CPJ that the media workers were harassed and detained in Nigeria. Also, all respondents (4 of 4) believed that journalists face physical attacks, emotional attacks, and moral attacks in the process of carrying out their duties. This is in line with the findings of Chinweobo-Onuoha et al. (2021), that found out that journalists are faced with threats and attacks, especially in covering Protest. Brambila & Hughes (2019) also reported in the same line as the finding of this study that the preferred approach in academic research has been to define violence as physical and psychological attacks. Respondent 2 defined Violence against Journalist as " attacks against the journalist is anything that causes depression, anything the violates professional and constitutional rights of the journalist is called violence against a journalist " the forms of violence, according to respondent 3, can be "physical attacks, emotional attacks that may affect a journalist productivity, delivery of service."

Furthermore finding showed that the respondents in this study also agree that the pattern violence against journalists takes was mainly due to the event or environment. Respondents one pointed at "political rallies or political thuggery targeted at a journalist" as a pattern. Respondent 4 mentioned communal conflict "in the case of patterns violence against journalist in Osun has been witnessed in communal feud one notable one is the Ife/Modakeke clash when they think a journalist is against them they attack such a person". Ola (2020), in his study, found that elections time brings sentiments, thus, making the political scene tensed towards journalists whom they see as enemies.

Also significant cause of violence against journalists agreed upon by the respondents agreed as silencing the media, silencing the truth and trying to stop the journalist from revealing the truth. If the truth has been revealed, then the perpetrators want to do away with such a person or to do away with the medium the journalist is representing. This agrees with Ciboh (2017), that since the people consider the stories compassionate, they tend to attack the journalist not to publish them. This present study does not correspond with Ibrahim, Umaru, Pate & Usman (2020). He found that the Nigerian journalist's breach of journalistic ethics and aggressive practices in the election period were reasons for threats against journalists. They also found gross incompetence from journalists, leading to attacks on them. Meanwhile, Ola (2020) summits that for some people, covering particular occurrences in elections as a journalistic priority is an attempt to damage the interests of a person or people about whom they are reporting, while for others, it is an act of hostility. Thus they do not see them as the right people to disseminate the information. This is not consistent with the social responsibility theory that says the journalist should be free to and not be gaged. However, the journalist must be socially responsible to society and not publish what will injure society. Thus, the perpetrators of violence do not trust the journalist enough to use their professionalism to report events.

Furthermore the respondents in this study all agreed that political actors were the foremost perpetrators of violence against a journalist. This finding agrees with Pukalis & Harrison (2018), who found that the criminals who carry out attacks on journalists are mostly legally tasked with protecting journalists, such as police and other security agencies and government employees. According to (Ola 2020), this

agrees that because journalists try to release information that is seen as very harmful for public consumption, it makes them the target of those who see them as threats. He went on to say that most of the agents of such acts are government agents.

The study also found that journalists can promote safety issues in their places of work as the majority of the respondents said that their various media could report issues bordering on journalism safety and give it much prominence. As noted by respondent one, “media organisations from newspapers to electronic should not just report issues of harassment or violence against journalist but give it prominence and also call the authorities to order in the reports” respondents 4 also believe that “if such violence happens other stations or media outlets should always rally around the other and collectively report such cases” because it is something that affects the industry. As such, once a journalist is assaulted, it is reported immediately. Another way to promote safety as agreed by all respondents is for the journalist to be well equipped and know their safety tips for specific events. Respondent 3 agrees thus, "journalists covering protest must not go dressed up like they are covering a wedding or a banquet it is a serious event so put on flexible shoes and be protected". According to respondent 2, "if possible, media houses should provide bullet prove jackets". Asogwa, Ogodo & Ibe (2021), and Pate & Dauda (2020) all found that there was a need for punishments backed by the Constitution to be a deterrent for those who engage in attacking the journalist from doing their constitutional jobs. They also made recommendations for teaching and training journalists in areas of professionalism and handling threats and attacks as part f the professional hazards of the job.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Thus, this study concludes that journalists are routinely harassed, intimidated, attacked, and assaulted. Press freedom regulations such as those protecting journalists from libel and defamation are routinely violated when they are used to falsely accuse them of acts of espionage, subversion, or national security threats. Journalists who investigate, document, and report sensitive issues, such as elections human rights abuses or protests, are often targeted in attacks. As a result, attacks on journalists harm not just the individuals targeted but also the values of free speech and democracy. Because of their importance, they require special

attention. Freedom of the press and the right to freedom of the press depend on the safety of journalists.

Accordingly, this research recommends that Nigeria address the issue of journalist safety and protection. In Nigeria, media organisations in Osun State should develop a safety plan to protect their staff. Journalists can also be educated and re-educated on safety concerns. Journalists in Nigeria should be encouraged by their governments to purchase life insurance. In addition, the remuneration of Nigerian journalists should be re-evaluated. In addition, the government must provide enough security and enact regulations to safeguard journalists against acts of hostility. Security officials should be trained to respect, protect, and recognise journalists as associates during political demonstrations, protests, and elections.

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