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in Kano State, Nigeria**

*Eric Msughter Aondover, Solomon A. Oyeleye,  
Ifedolapo Ademosu*

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# Chapter FOUR



## Investigating Digital Safety of Journalists in Kano State, Nigeria

*Eric Msughter Aondover,  
Solomon A. Oyeleye,  
Ifedolapo Ademosu,*

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines digital safety of journalists in Kano State, so as to examine the magnitude online attacks on journalists in Kano State identify the online threats to journalists in Kano State; and determine the consequences of the online attacks on journalists in the State. A census of 380 registered journalists with the Kano State Chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), and working with television, radio and newspapers organization in Kano were used for the study. Based on the findings, the study discovered that online

attacks on journalists in Kano State do occur several times. The findings of the study revealed that trolling is a major threat to journalists in Kano State. Also, the major consequence of online attacks on journalists in Kano State is that it curtails freedom of speech and expression. Therefore, the study recommends that journalists should build a culture of support by reporting attacks to the organisation they work for. Similarly, mitigating trolling of journalists is crucial to ensure their safety and well-being. Journalists should use strong, unique passwords and enable two-factor authentication (2FA) on all their accounts as well as use encrypted communication tools like Signal for sensitive conversations. Also, journalists should be provided with adequate training on recognizing phishing attempts, safe browsing habits, and secure data storage. Media organisations and the government should ensure that journalists are given legal support by taking action against severe cases of cyber stalking or threat.

**Keywords:** Digital safety, Intimidation, Journalists, Online harassment and Threats.

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## Introduction

Historically, the Vietnam War represented the height of combat reporting for journalists since they had access to both sides in the fighting zone rather than being a target. However, the US invasion of Grenada in 1983 brought concerns about the safety of journalists into the public domain. Influenced by analogous British actions amid the 1982 occupation of Falkland Island, the United States effectively enforced a blackout on media. After forty-eight (48) hours, journalists awaiting permission to visit neighboring Barbados

were allowed to report on Grenada. The U.S' State Department defends its action for excluding journalists on the ground that the safety of the journalists cannot be guaranteed. The option of embedding journalists in armed forces coincides with increasingly dangerous and protracted conflicts in which journalists were becoming targets. This practice began in 1995 with the British invasion of Bosnia and it continued in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively (Carlsson & Poyhtari, 2017).

The issue of journalists' safety appears to be growing worse with an increasing number of journalists' killings, kidnapping and imprisonment worldwide. However, the situation appears not to be or given more concern within the circle of academic research which scholars like Uwalaka and Amadi (2024) agreed will contribute to in-depth understanding of the issues. Committee to Protect Journalists (2016) also indicate that independent journalism is vital in any democratic society because it drives the right to hold and express opinions and the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, as defined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It also contributes to ensuring transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs and other matters of public interest and it enables individuals to participate fully, actively and meaningfully in all aspects of society. Similarly, regional organisations have contributed to standard-setting and awareness and have established specific mechanisms tasked with promoting and protecting the right to freedom of expression with the safety of journalists as the main concern. These include the African Union (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights), European Union (Council of Europe), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of American States (Pate & Idris, 2016).

Therefore, section 39 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) recognizes that every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference; though in section 45, the Constitution has provided that the freedom of media and expression can be restricted by any law 'reasonably justifiable' in a democratic society. According to subsection (2) without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for dissemination of information, ideas and opinion: provided that no person other than the Government of the Federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the President on the fulfillment of conditions laid down by an act of the National Assembly shall own, establish or operate a TV or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever.

Constitutionally, the media has the responsibility of upholding the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy as well as holding the government accountable to the citizens. However, the Constitution did not make specified provision for the safety and protection of journalists, except like that of every other citizen, all journalists in principle benefit from the right to life, and the prohibition against forced disappearance and torture. The right to life and freedom of expression include positive duties such as the duty to investigate and prosecute perpetrators if journalists are victimized (Egbunike, 2024). Similarly, Aluma (2017) argued in this direction, Nigerian Constitution recognizes the role of media and its professionals in ensuring good governance, but does not provide specific protection for media freedom and their professionals beyond the freedom of speech granted to every citizen.

In this context, the issue of digital safety has been a topic of major concern for policy makers and media advocacy organisations globally. As Sanda et al., (2018) captured it; the safety of journalist is one of the most formidable challenges for press freedom and democracy around the world. Although the pressing issue of safety and welfare of journalists have attracted scholarly attention, especially in conflict-ridden settings, there is an increasing acknowledgement that digital technologies are double-edged swords. On the one hand, they help journalists conduct their craft with efficiency and effectiveness required in deadline-oriented working spaces. On the other hand, these digital technologies expose journalists to various 'dark forms of participation'. Online attacks against journalists have been a pernicious problem for many years. Now, these appear to be increasing dramatically and uncontrollably around the world (Sanda et al., 2018).

Online violence against journalists has emerged as a formidable threat to journalistic integrity and freedom of expression. Despite the critical role of the media in informing the public and shaping discourse, the increasing prevalence of online violence targeted at journalists raises significant concerns about the digital safety and wellbeing of journalists. Digital safety of journalists has become a major hazard to the profession, one that threatens their continued online presence, and ability to do their jobs, thereby violating their right to freedom of expression as well as hampering free and open access to information for all members of society (Yeon-Lee et al., 2024). Journalism as a challenging profession exposes journalists to risks and difficulties at various levels. Journalists face serious risks such as attacks, threats, arbitrary arrests and detention, and even murder every day, just for doing their jobs of reporting the news and bringing information to the public domain (Zviyita & Mare, 2024). The problem is further exacerbated by a lack of comprehensive research that delves

into the nuances of this issue within the specific regional context, like Kano State in the Northwest of Nigeria. Thus, the gap in knowledge this study seeks to address is digital safety of journalists in Kano State, so as to develop effective strategies that enhance journalists' safety, well being and professional journalistic engagement while contributing to a more equitable and informed media environment.

Journalism has greatly benefited from the digital age, but it has also faced many difficulties, including threats and abuse from the internet that can cause emotional distress or even result in a journalist's murder. According to Olaitan et al., (2022), 37 out of the 276 journalists who were assassinated between 2011 and 2013 had digital tools and worked online. Likewise, Internet journalists made up 44 of the 70 journalists who were assassinated in 2013 and half of the journalists who were imprisoned in 2013. In this contestation, journalists face violence and intimidation for exercising and carrying out their duties (Zviyita & Mare, 2024). With the advancement of digital technology, safety issues there are considerable security risks for journalists who use the Internet and other digital technologies (Wilson & Gapsiso, 2017). Nigerian journalists are not immune from these risks. These risks come in various forms, such as threats, Cyber-surveillance, New forms of censorship among others (Wilson, 2018). Journalists in Kano have been exposed to these safety issues, such as online attacks and online threats (Olaitan et al., 2022). However, the magnitude of these online attacks, the types of the threat and their consequences are unclear, therefore this study examined the digital safety of journalists in Kano.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine digital safety of journalists in Kano State. Within this context, the following specific objectives are set:

1. To examine the magnitude of online attacks on journalists in Kano State.
2. To identify the online threats to journalists in Kano State.
3. To determine the consequences of the online attacks on journalists in Kano State.

### **Online Attacks on Journalists**

Cybersecurity risks in the digital sphere include lost or restricted access to technology that facilitates safe and secure communication, spying, and Internet outages. States that compile a great deal of information about journalists, including their whereabouts, networks, and sources, are frequently the source of digital threats. The media can then be intimidated by authorities using this intelligence. Media outlets and journalists frequently lack the knowledge and skills necessary to adequately safeguard their sources, their information, and themselves. Online harassment, which can take many different forms, including direct harassment like trolling or invasions of privacy like hacking, is another danger to digital safety. Since the Internet is a medium of communication, it is subject to the same restrictions that apply to other forms of communication due to the freedom of expression. Hence, these internet-based limitations on the right to free speech are only permissible insofar as they are compliant with internationally recognized norms, including legal provisions and the need to safeguard an interest that is acknowledged by international law.

While some news companies provide training and have policies about digital security, many do not. Furthermore, there is a dearth of national and international legislation that effectively handles cyberbullying. Law enforcement organizations frequently only publish reports without taking any further action. A growing number of incidents of digital

abuse have compelled journalists to give up on projects or perhaps the industry. Women journalists are particularly vulnerable to this kind of harassment, since, when they publish their work online, they frequently receive threats of murder that include personal information and graphic rape. Certain major websites that journalists frequently use, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, have policies in place prohibiting harassment and cyberbullying. For example, victims of harassment are advised by YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to report and block the offending individuals, and if the situation gets worse, to report it to law enforcement. But these actions have a narrow focus and don't ensure that harassers will face consequences. Harassers might easily create new accounts or use different IP addresses if they are deleted. Assistance for journalists experiencing other forms of internet harassment, such as doxing, is not included in these measures. Furthermore, these restrictions are ineffective in protecting journalists on websites like Reedit or 4chan, which allow nasty comments, particularly directed at journalists, or in the online news sites' comment sections.

For example, the majority of cyberbullying incidents in Kano occur on Twitter and other social media sites, particularly targeting women. This may be linked to the limited freedom that women in Kano, enjoy in their community. For example, renowned journalist Kadaria Ahmed is often harassed, threatened with death, and called names filled with offensive remarks because she chose to stand up for the people in her home state of Zamfara State. However, Kadaria's actions may not have brought the brutal murder of defenseless citizens in her neighborhood to the notice of the federal government or the Zamfara State administration.

## **Online Threats to Journalists**

In several parts of the world, protecting journalists has been a major concern. This is due to an upsurge in journalistic attacks, but it's also a result of changes in the international landscape that have raised awareness of the problem and affected other players. It is possible and desirable to draw a distinction between safety and other aspects of journalism, such as media freedom, pluralism, independence, gender issues, and digital issues (UNESCO 2016). UNESCO has underscored the significance of conducting research aimed at increasing consciousness of the possible hazards that journalists may encounter in both non-conflict and conflictual environments. Worldwide, research on the safety of journalists is expanding (Airaoje et al., 2023).

Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and other international media watchdogs have performed annual polls on media freedom that show a decline in journalist safety over time. Though there are numerous benefits to the digital era, there are drawbacks as well. Despite the hazy boundaries between online and offline behaviour, journalists in today's digital environment face daily hazards that might range from online abuse to death (Suraj & Olaleye, 2016). According to the International Women's Media Foundation (2016, p. 8), digital harassment and attacks include:

1. Direct harassment in the form of emails and social media posts (such as encouraging others to publicly criticize them and raising questions about the journalist's integrity).
2. Trolling: This includes posting deliberately offensive or provocative comments online with the intention of eliciting an angry or upset response.
3. Doxxing or leaked information: This type of abuse involves the public disclosure of private information,

such as a physical address or personal information. Electronic communications and access are hampered or cut off.

4. Hacking personal accounts to steal identities or send fake messages damages a journalist's reputation.

IWMF (2016) observes that there is a need for more awareness on the risk of digital abuse and harassment for journalists. As more journalists participate in online journalism and use online resources for news production and distribution, there are increasing risks to their safety when it comes to the internet. An aggressive individual or group can follow journalists' physical movements and keep tabs on their private conversations with confidential sources with the use of digital surveillance and intruders. This endangers the sources as well as the journalists (IWMF, 2016). There aren't many international or national rules protecting journalists from threats and abuse on the internet. A large number of media professionals are not aware of cyber safety practices such as "password protection," "limiting exposure," "information posted on social media," or "communicating through code," nor do they have the encryption technology required to protect their communications to some degree (UNESCO, 2016). Regulators and news organizations are still having difficulty finding a middle ground between the freedom of speech and sensible measures to stop online harassment (UNESCO, 2016).

Few media companies have begun educating their staff members on cyber-security resources like "Terms of Reference" (TOR) and "Pretty Good Privacy" (PGP). Formal regulations are still lacking in the majority of media organizations. Hacking and the theft of digital data have been used to scare and try to silence practitioners. The New York Times and Bloomberg News are only two of the several media

sites that have been compromised. Consequently, there exist communities who perceive journalists as unfit to protect the privacy, safety, and security of their sources. While many journalists encounter online harassment in one way or another, harassment directed specifically at female journalists is a common occurrence. As per IWMMF (2013), out of the 921 participants in a research study on violence and harassment against women in the news media, over 25% replied to online threats, harsh criticism, verbal abuse, "name-calling," and harassment (IWMMF, 2016, p. 8). For instance, hidden cameras in Khadija Ismayilova's Azerbaijani home recorded her and her boyfriend's intimate moments. Pictures of the videos circulated online as she persisted in exposing abuses of power and corruption in the government. After accusing the government of launching a propaganda campaign, she was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison on grounds of inciting suicide (IWMMF, 2016).

Unaegbu (2017) conducted a study in which survey was used as the method and the instrument of data collection was questionnaire. The basic aim of the study was to find out if there are differences with regard to safety issue among male and female journalists and why male journalists remain top of the list of victims. The findings of the study revealed that 74 per cent of the respondents indicated that they have faced threats in the discharge of their journalistic responsibility and 26 per cent indicated otherwise. The findings reveal that safety issues with regard to journalists within the jurisdiction of the research and the respondents pointed out physical safety challenges than digital challenges like assault, harassment, verbal or physical attacks, arrests by state actors and even detention.

The findings of the study also reveal that those in charge of law and order are also responsible in the threats and impunity against the safety of journalists. The findings of the study

reveals that safety issue is a challenge that both male and female journalists face in their routine job, for instance, issues like confiscation of working tools, arrests and detention by security agencies, physical and online attacks by state and non-state actors, however, the female journalists frequently face sexual harassment and intimidation while male journalists usually face physical and online attacks. To keep the society informed and educated which is the fundamental role journalists are playing, the study recommended that journalists deserves a special protection from the society.

### **Consequences of the Online Attacks on Journalists**

Nigeria has a comparatively high Internet penetration rate because mobile platforms are expanding quickly. According to data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the percentage of Nigerians who use the Internet climbed significantly from 26% in 2018 to 38% in 2022. By 2027, the percentage is expected to rise to 60%. Even while the delivery of news has become more efficient using the digital means, journalists are taking on more and more responsibility for the entire production process. Attacks on journalists are common in third-world countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Aondover & Pate, 2021). The majority of journalists working in these areas are ignorant of the safety protocols that need to be observed during times of conflict and emergency (Idris & Aondover, 2022). One illustration is the growing interest in safety training in West Africa among academics and foreign sponsors. However, this hasn't made journalists in the area feel particularly protected or secure. Journalists continue to face danger while performing their duties due to the expansion of terrorist organizations like Boko Haram in the region as well as other conflicts.

A lack of proper training in peace journalism, violent extremism and conflict reporting; internal and external danger education

may be partially blamed for these kinds of professional risks. According to Gonzalez, et al. cited by Msughter (2017), three factors, a professional work environment, the experience and training of journalists, safety equipment and education, have a significant impact on how well journalists carry out their duties in the field. In 2020, UNESCO and the International Centre for Journalists carried out an online survey on gender-based violence in 15 nations, including Ghana and Nigeria. A total of 73% of the female journalists surveyed reported having been the victim of an online attack, while Facebook and Twitter (X) were found to be among the least safe websites for female journalists.

For example, Tawa Yusuf, a member of the International Press Institute, noted in an interview that she encounters discrimination against women in the course of carrying out her duties as a journalist. There are media companies who refuse to hire women because they think they are less skilled than men. One of the daily newspapers reported on studies indicating that women face discrimination at work due to their marital status. Another example is the award-winning Nigerian journalist Ruona Meyer, who faced relentless online harassment for a whole year following the release of her BBC investigation revealing the country's cough syrup cartels.

Serial hacking of media websites and the computers of journalists appears to be on the rise in Nigeria. There are digital monitoring and tracking tools that go beyond what is permitted by international norms for journalists' privacy rights and freedom of expression. Yet, journalists go about their business, unaware of the dangers of the digital age (Ibogwe, 2010). Journalists, news outlets, and truth-tellers have all been subjected to monitoring, which has included phishing and cyber-spying, as well as bogus domains and denial-of-service attacks (Msughter, 2017). Suraj and Olaleye (2017) note that

most Nigerian journalists are aware of digital safety practice to a certain extent. They protect their digital communication gadgets with anti-virus software and secure passwords. However, most journalists don't use their VPNs or encrypt their sensitive data when using unsecured public networks, placing them at risk.

Robert (2016) suggested that local journalists working in nations plagued by repressive governments, war, organized crime, and/or corruption make up the great majority of those killed and kidnapped. Numerous journalists have been assassinated, kidnapped, harassed, attacked, or compromised. The arguments for why journalists are attacked are primarily based on their efforts to fulfill their obligations as prescribed by domestic and international laws and conventions, such as reporting crimes, corruptions, mismanagement, and abuse of human rights. However, other studies, such as Base Line Report (2015), have taken a different stance. One of such study was a base line study conducted in Uganda about the relationship between increased attacks on journalists. The connection is plainly seen and indicates unethical behaviour (Base Line Report, 2015).

Pate and Idris (2016) conducted a study in the North East of Nigeria. Through a series of interviews information was elicited from 20 journalists and 10 senior managers from different media houses of different categories, including broadcast and print media, who had participated in the coverage of the insurgency, as well as officials of News Agency of Nigeria (NAN). The study focused on journalists operating in such conflict-ridden zones.

The findings of the study revealed that terrorists and insurgents realize the important of communication because the group use multi-media channels to publicize their

ideologies, issue threats to the public and recruit new members. Similarly, with transformation of the Boko Haram group into a full terror organisation, they called journalists and media houses asking them to report their activities including attacks; several journalists receive calls to report killing of people. The study also indicated that some local and foreign correspondents fled Maiduguri for their safety for instance, Bilkisu Labaran and Haruna Dauda Biu of British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) and Voice of America (VOA) respectively and specific media houses and journalists were among prime targets. For instance from 2009 to 2015, the Boko Haram group killed four Nigerian journalists and the killing cut across both public and private media employees for example, Zakariya Isah of Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) and Enenche Okogwu of Channels TV. The findings show that specific media houses were threatened and the group even actualized their threats. The case of Abuja and Kaduna Thisday office attacks where an employee was killed and their reason for the attacks was that the newspapers do not give them prominence by placing their stories on front page.

The findings of the study also reveals that safety challenges does not only comes from the insurgents but the situation becomes more complicated as the result of the activities of frequently issuing unfriendly invitations to journalists, physical harassment, breach of telephone lines and detention. The study also found that those journalists in the region developed tactics of survival through identity concealing, adhering strictly to the code of ethics of the profession, developing network of sources and avoidance of dangerous spots. The study recommended that insurance for all practicing journalists will improve curriculum for the training of media professionals to contain issues of safety and survival. Similarly, the welfare of journalists should be looked into, with allowances and prompt payment as well as other remunerations for covering

assignments that are violent in nature.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Rogers introduced the Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) in 1975 (Jansen, 2015), theory first created to describe how to influence risky behaviours and what elements should be in a persuasive message (Somme stad et al., 2015). The hypothesis was first put forth to explain fear appeals, but its application has now been expanded to cover all forms of persuasive communication (Boer & Seydel, 1995).

When Rogers first created the Protection Motivation Theory in 1975, he claimed that the factors that would determine protection motivation were an event's severity or noxiousness (severity), its likelihood of happening if no protective behaviour is taken (vulnerability), and the effectiveness of the suggested behaviour (response efficacy). A more comprehensive theory of persuasive communication was offered when the PMT was modified in 1983, and stimuli variables (such as personality and prior experience) that were thought to indirectly affect the cognitive processes identified. The theory was also expanded to include concepts thought to be crucial to cognitive processes, such as rewards linked to threats (such as a stolen identity) and response costs and self-efficacy linked to altering behaviour (such as installing a security system) (Somme stad, et al, 2015).

Threat and coping appraisals are the two cognitive processes that underpin the idea. Threat appraisal examines both the psychological and physical aspects of a threat's likelihood and impact, whereas coping appraisal assesses potential defenses against the threat (Jansen, 2015). Threat assessment, in accordance with Boer and Seydel (1995), focuses on the source of threat and potential variables that may lessen or raise "maladaptive response". Maladaptive

responses are factors that enable people to assess their level of susceptibility to the threat and make decisions about avoidance, denial, etc. For instance, a smoker would think about the danger of lung cancer and their potential future risk of contracting the illness.

Adaptive response variables aid people in understanding the efficacy of advised safety precautions (response efficacy) and their own capacity to follow such advice (self-efficacy). "The threat appraisal will result in higher protection motivation if the individual perceives it is more vulnerable to the threat and/or the severity of consequence," (Sommestad et al. 2015, p. 2). If the person believes the suggested coping strategy is practical and easy to use, the coping appraisal will lead to greater protective motivation. More specifically, more protection motivation will result from favourable appraisals of response efficacy and self-efficacy, whereas lower protection motivation would result from higher response costs.

According to Boer and Seydel (1995), the key tenet of the protection motivation hypothesis is that in order for protection motivation to be evoked, perception of severity and vulnerability should outweigh the benefits associated with maladaptive action. Additionally, self-efficacy and impression of response effectiveness should take precedence over the expense of the adaptive behaviour (p. 85). Therefore, a threat's beneficial effects must outweigh its detrimental effects in order for people to avoid it, for it to be safe. They also require encouragement to trust in the efficacy of the measures and their own capacity to implement them if they are to take protective measures. Scholars like Sommestad et al. (2015) have employed protection motivation theory with success in domains connected to safety and protection measures, and it is regarded as useful, which is also apt in this study.

Drawing on the protection motivation theory, journalists'

computer systems and media websites, appear to be on the rise in Nigeria. There are online attacks, online threats and consequences of the online attacks on journalists in Kano. Yet, journalists go about their business, unaware of the dangers of the digital age. Also, Suraj and Olaleye (2017) corroborate that most Nigerian journalists are aware of digital safety practice to a certain extent. They make use of strong passwords and anti-virus software on their digital communication devices. However, when using non-secured public networks, most journalists do not encrypt their important data and do not utilize their VPNs, putting them at risk. This therefore means that most journalists are aware of digital threats. However, due to low training and knowledge of advanced digital security strategies, they fail to protect themselves from online attacks.

## **Method and Materials**

The study employed survey method using questionnaire to generate data. A census of 380 registered journalists with the Kano State Chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) (Ya'u, 2020), working with television, radio or newspapers organization in Kano was considered. This is because all journalists in Kano know about the online safety issues. The population was stratified into media organisation types - television, radio and newspaper, from which proportional allocation of the questionnaires was done. Thus, Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis, using frequency and percentages.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The 380 questionnaires copies were self-administered; all were retrieved and were found usable. The findings are presented based on the research objectives

**Table 1: Gender of the Respondents**

Please select your gender		
	N	Percentage %
Female	165	43.4
Male	215	56.6
Total	380	100

Table 1 shows the frequency of the respondents based on gender, 43.4% (n=165) are female respondents while 56.6% (n=215) are male respondents. This means that male respondents are the dominant gender in this study. This shows that there are more male journalists that participated in the study.

**Table 2: Age Group of the Respondents**

	N	Percentage %
(a)20-25 years	43	11.3
(b)26-30 years	87	22.9
(c)31-35 years	119	31.3
(d)36-40 years	94	24.7
(e)40 years above	37	9.7
Total	380	100

Table 2 shows the age group of the respondents. Based on the data, 11.3% (n=43) are between the age of 20-25 years, 22.9% (n=87) are between the age of 26-30 years, 31.3% (n=119) are between the age of 31-35 years, 24.7% (n=94) are between the age of 36-40 years and 9.7% (n=37) are between the age of 40 years above. This means that respondents from 31-35 years of age are the dominant participants in the study.

**Table 3: Position of the Respondents**

	N	Percentage %
Senior Reporter	96	25.3
Junior Reporter	131	34.5
Asst. Reporter	127	33.4
Others	26	6.8
Total	380	100

Table 3 shows the various positions the respondents hold. Based on the data, 25.3% (n=96) are senior reporters, 34.5% (n=131) are junior reporters, 33.4% (n=127) are assistant reporters and 6.8% (n=26) are in other categories. This implies that most of the respondents are junior reporters.

**Table 4: Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

	N	Percentage %
SSCE	68	17.9
Diploma/NCE	94	24.7
B.Sc/HND	139	36.7
M.Sc	70	18.4
Ph.D	9	2.4
Total	380	100

Table 4 shows the different levels of educational qualifications among the respondents. The data indicates that 17.9% (n=68) have SSCE, 24.7% (n=94) are Diploma/NCE holders, 36.7% (n=139) are B.Sc/HND holders. Similarly, the table indicates that 18.4% (n=70) are M.Sc holders while 2.4% (n=9) are Ph.D holders. This implies that the majority of the respondents have B.Sc or HND degrees.

**Table 5: Magnitude of Online Attacks on Journalists in Kano State**

	N	Percentage %
Several times	172	45.3
Once daily	109	28.7
Once in a while	86	22.6
No attack	13	3.4
Total	380	100

Table 5 shows responses to the extent of online attacks on journalists in Kano State. Data indicates that 45.3% (n=172) of the respondents said online attacks on journalists occur several times in the state, 28.7% (n=109) said once daily, 22.6% (n=86) said once in a while and 3.4% (n=13) said no attack. This implies that online attacks on journalists in Kano State occur several times. This corroborates the findings by Lohner et al., (2016) that in the global impunity against journalist index, Nigeria was ranked 13<sup>th</sup> globally and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa after Somalia and South Sudan.

**Table 6: Online Threats to Journalists in Kano State**

	N	Percentage %
Trolling	144	38.9
Threatening emails	95	25
Threat, warnings, shaming, warning	73	19.2
Cyber-stalking	68	17.9
Others	0	0
Total	380	100

Although in table 6 some respondents indicated none regarding magnitude. They are aware of the online threats, which informed the inclusion of their responses in this table.

Table 6 shows the online threats to journalists in Kano State. The data indicates that 38.9% (n=144) of the respondents admitted to the existence of trolling (38.9%) threatening e-mails (25%), threats (19.2%) and cyber-stalking (17.98%). This means that trolling is a major threat to journalists in Kano State. Pate and Idris (2016) findings show that specific media houses were threatened and the group even actualised their threats, the case of Abuja and Kaduna Thisday office attack where an employee was killed and their reason for the attack was that the newspapers do not give them prominence by placing their stories on front page. The findings of the study also reveals that safety challenges does not only come from the insurgents but the situation becomes more complicated as the result of the activities of frequently issuing unfriendly invitations to journalists, physical harassment, breach of telephone lines and detention.

**Table 7: Consequences of the Online Attacks on Journalists in Kano State**

	N	Percentage %
Journalists are forced to drop a story	117	30.8
Curtails freedom of speech and expression	159	41.8
Lack of societal access to quality information	71	18.7
Unethical journalistic engagements	33	8.7
Total	380	100

Although in table 7 some respondents indicated none regarding magnitude. They are aware of the consequences of online attacks, which informed the inclusion of their responses in this table. Table 7 shows the result on the consequences of

the attacks on journalists in Kano State. The data indicates that 30.8% of the respondents said journalists are forced to drop a story, 41.8% are of the opinion that it curtails freedom of speech and expression, 18.7% said lack of societal access to quality information, and 8.7% said unethical journalistic engagements are common. This implies that the major consequence of online attacks on journalists in Kano State is that it curtails freedom of speech and expression.

Unaegbu (2017) findings also corroborates that safety issues with regard to journalists within the jurisdiction of the research and the respondents pointed out physical safety challenges than digital challenges like assault, harassment, verbal or physical attacks, arrests by state actors and even detention. The findings of the study also reveal that those in charge of law and order are also responsible for the threats and impunity against the safety of journalists. The findings of the study reveals that safety issue is a challenge that both male and female journalists face in their routine job, for instance, issues like confiscation of working tools, arrests and detention by security agencies, physical attacks by state and non-state actors, among others.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

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. Arising from the findings, the study discovered that online attacks on journalists in Kano State do occur several times. The findings of the study revealed that trolling is a major threat to journalists in Kano State. Also, the major consequence of online attacks on journalists in Kano State is that it curtails freedom of speech and expression. Therefore, the study recommends that journalists should build a culture of support by reporting attacks to the organisation they work for. Similarly, mitigating trolling of journalists is crucial to ensuring their safety and well-being. Journalists should use strong, unique passwords and enable two-factor authentication (2FA) on all their accounts as well as use encrypted communication tools like Signal for sensitive conversations. Also, journalists should be provided with adequate training on recognising phishing attempts, safe browsing habits, and secure data storage. Media organisation and the government should ensure that journalists are given legal support by taking action against severe cases of cyber stalking or threats. Implementing these recommendations can help create a safer online environment for journalists, enabling them to continue their crucial work without fear of harassment or stalking.

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