

participatory discussion of women's economic challenges, communication barriers they experienced, and suggestions for strengthening knowledge ecosystems to support their advancement. FGDs provided rich contextual understanding of women's lived experiences while generating insights about grassroots communication needs and preferences.

Data analysis employed iterative thematic coding conducted across all qualitative sources. Initial coding identified passages addressing three research dimensions: collaborative research effectiveness, strategic communication interventions, and knowledge ecosystem gaps. Subsequent analysis developed more refined codes capturing specific themes, patterns, and connections. Final analysis integrated themes across data sources, examined patterns and variations across the three research sites, and developed interpretive frameworks explaining how strategic communication shapes knowledge ecosystem functioning.

Findings

Analysis revealed that strategic communication functions as a critical infrastructure element for knowledge ecosystem development and gender-inclusive economic empowerment in Northern Nigeria, though significant barriers limit its current effectiveness. Three major findings emerged from systematic analysis of interview, focus group, and document data.

Finding 1: Collaborative Research Effectiveness

Current research in Northern Nigeria frequently operates through disconnected projects where academic researchers conduct investigations with limited input from policymakers, practitioners, or community members, subsequently publishing findings in inaccessible journals. Participants emphasized that moving beyond this pattern requires integrating communication planning into research design from inception.

Theme 1.1: Current Research Disconnection

The data reveals a persistent perception among practitioners that academic research operates in isolation from development realities. A development practitioner from Plateau State articulated this disconnect: "We often feel like 'research subjects' rather than 'partners.' Academics come with pre-set agendas that don't align with the immediate economic pressures we face in the Northcentral region" (R5.) This sentiment was echoed across multiple focus group discussions, indicating that research-practice disconnection represents a systemic barrier to collaborative effectiveness.

Theme 1.2: Communication Planning Integration

Successful collaborative research emerged when institutions deliberately integrated

communication planning throughout project lifecycles rather than treating it as a final dissemination activity. "In reality, we moved away from a 'dissemination-at-the-end' model. We held monthly radio briefings and community town halls throughout the study. This kept the momentum alive" (R2,). This iterative approach to stakeholder communication maintained ongoing dialogue and enabled real-time research adaptation based on community feedback.

Theme 1.3: Impact of Strategic Communication on Policy and Practice Action

The strength of research impact on policy and practice depends substantially on deliberate translation of complex findings into accessible formats. A government consultant reflected on the Kano commercial hub study: "The success of the Kano commercial hub study was due to the 'translation' phase. We turned complex econometric data into a strategic roadmap that the State Assembly could actually debate" (R12). This transformation of academic findings into actionable policy documents enabled research to move beyond academic spaces and influence concrete government decision-making.

Finding 2: Strategic Communication Interventions Effectively Challenge Socio-Cultural Barriers.

Gender disparities in entrepreneurship and technical sectors in Northern Nigeria persist partly because dominant narratives portray women's economic roles as culturally inappropriate, secondary to household responsibilities, and unsuitable for technical professions.

Theme 2.1: Dominant Limiting Narratives About Women's Economic Roles

Focus group discussions revealed deeply entrenched cultural narratives constraining women's economic participation. A participant from Kano articulated a pervasive belief: "The common refrain in focus groups was that 'too much money changes a woman.' This narrative creates a psychological barrier that prevents women from scaling their businesses" (FGD 1, Participant 3, Kano). This narrative, that financial independence threatens women's moral character—functions as a significant psychological and social barrier to women's entrepreneurial advancement.

Theme 2.2: Effective Counter, Narrative Strategies Using Culturally Resonant Approaches

Communication interventions most effectively challenged limiting narratives when they drew on culturally resonant examples and storytelling approaches rather than external models. A communication consultant described this approach: "We found that using 'storytelling', specifically focusing on successful widows or female heads of households who remained pillars of virtue, shifted the conversation from 'rebellion' to 'resilience'" (R8,

Communication Consultant). By reframing women's economic agency within existing cultural categories of respectability and family obligation, counter-narratives achieved greater cultural legitimacy and community acceptance.

Theme 2.3: Male Engagement and Alliance-Building in Norm Transformation

Participants emphasized that engaging men as allies in norm transformation, rather than positioning them only as obstacles, significantly enhanced communication intervention effectiveness. A focus group participant from Borno described this shift: "We invited husbands and community leaders to the workshops. When they realized that a wife's income meant better schooling for their children, they shifted from being gatekeepers to being facilitators" (FGD 3, Participant 7, Borno). When communication interventions helped men understand how women's economic empowerment aligned with household wellbeing and children's advancement, resistance transformed into active support.

Theme 2.4: Communication Effectiveness Outcomes

Communication campaigns and community dialogues utilizing these norm-transforming approaches, involving community opinion leaders, religious scholars, and respected women advocates, achieved stronger engagement and attitude shifts compared to top-down awareness initiatives. The participatory nature of these interventions created space for communities to develop locally-appropriate understandings of gender-equitable economic roles.

Finding 3: Substantial Gaps Characterize the Knowledge Generation, Dissemination, and Utilization Continuum

The gaps in the knowledge generation, dissemination, and utilization Continuum reveal that the "infrastructure" of knowledge is currently built on a masculine, formal-sector bias that excludes grassroots reality and constrains the integration of diverse knowledge forms essential for transformative development.

Theme 3.1: Knowledge Validation and Integration Gaps

Participants identified that women's experiential knowledge remains systematically undervalued within formal knowledge and policy systems. A women's business association representative articulated this gap: "The expertise of the woman running a large-scale cottage industry in a rural village is rarely captured in 'official' knowledge systems. Her experiential data is the missing link in our economic policy" (R14). Limited mechanisms exist for validating and integrating women's experiential knowledge alongside academic evidence, resulting in incomplete understanding of economic realities.

Theme 3.2: Cross-Sector Dialogue Inadequacies

Inadequate platforms enabling regular cross-sector dialogue among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and community members create fundamental communication barriers. A financial sector representative identified a critical gap: "There is a massive 'language' gap. The researchers talk about 'variables,' the bankers talk about 'collateral,' and the women talk about 'survival.' We need a shared platform for synthesis" (R10, Financial Sector Representative). These institutional language barriers prevent the meaningful dialogue necessary for knowledge ecosystem development.

Theme 3.3: Institutional Incentive Structures Discouraging Collaborative Engagement

Weak institutional incentives rewarding collaborative research or communication engagement undermine ecosystem development. An academic professional identified this systemic constraint: "Our universities are still 'publish or perish.' If I spend six months building a knowledge ecosystem with the Ministry, it doesn't count toward my promotion. That is a systemic failure" (R3, Academic Professional). Current academic reward systems prioritize individual publication over collaborative knowledge ecosystem development, creating structural disincentives for engaged scholarship.

Theme 3.4: Funding Fragmentation and Episodic Project Support

Fragmented funding mechanisms supporting episodic research projects rather than sustained ecosystem development prevent long-term relationship-building and institutional collaboration. Participants emphasized that addressing sustained ecosystem development requires funding mechanisms supporting multi-year partnerships enabling sustained stakeholder engagement.

Theme 3.5: Capacity Gaps in Evidence-Informed Decision-Making

Insufficient capacity within government and civil society organizations for evidence-informed decision-making constrains knowledge utilization. Organizational capacity building must address skills gaps in research interpretation, evidence integration, and collaborative planning.

Theme 3.6: Structural Reforms Required

Addressing these gaps requires structural changes including establishing dedicated governance bodies coordinating knowledge ecosystem development, creating communication platforms enabling sustained stakeholder interaction, developing funding mechanisms supporting long-term ecosystem strengthening, and building organizational capacity for evidence-based planning. These systemic reforms cannot be addressed

through communication interventions alone but require policy and structural reforms at institutional and governmental levels.

Discussion of the Findings

These findings illuminate strategic communication's multifaceted roles in advancing gender-inclusive development through knowledge ecosystem strengthening. Strategic communication operates not as a peripheral dissemination function but rather as a constitutive element shaping whether knowledge ecosystems function inclusively and effectively. When communication is integrated into research design, when stakeholders engage continuously throughout research processes, when findings are translated into accessible formats, and when communication strategies address systemic barriers, knowledge ecosystems become instruments for gender-transformative development. Conversely, when communication remains an afterthought or focuses narrowly on information dissemination, knowledge ecosystems reproduce existing inequalities and fail to achieve development impact.

The norm-transforming communication findings align with literature emphasizing that challenging entrenched socio-cultural beliefs requires culturally-embedded, participatory approaches rather than external expert-driven campaigns (Dutta, 2007). In Northern Nigeria's specific contexts, women's economic empowerment requires not only addressing individual women's capabilities but transforming household, community, and institutional culture enabling their advancement. Communication interventions grounded in dialogic engagement with community members, respectful of cultural values while introducing alternative possibilities, and leveraging respected local voices prove more effective than transactional awareness campaigns. This suggests that gender-inclusive development communication in African contexts must balance critical consciousness-raising with cultural respect, supporting communities in developing locally-appropriate paths to gender equity rather than imposing external models.

The identified gaps between knowledge generation and utilization reflect broader development challenges documented across sub-Saharan African contexts. Academic institutions, government agencies, and civil society organizations operate through separate funding streams, accountabilities, and professional cultures that inhibit sustained collaboration. Northern Nigeria's research landscape includes internationally-affiliated universities focusing primarily on academic publication; government ministries with limited research capacity and competing demands on staff time; and civil society organizations working directly with communities but lacking research expertise or connections to knowledge production. Strategic communication can strengthen relationships across these institutional domains, but addressing systemic gaps requires

policy and structural reforms. Government must invest in evidence-based decision-making infrastructure; universities must reward interdisciplinary and engaged scholarship; and donors must fund long-term ecosystem development rather than individual projects.

These findings also highlight the importance of knowledge ecosystem approaches recognizing diverse knowledge forms. Women entrepreneurs in this study possessed substantial experiential knowledge about market dynamics, customer needs, production challenges, and culturally-appropriate business models, yet this knowledge remained undervalued within formal research and policy processes. Building genuinely inclusive knowledge ecosystems requires mechanisms validating and integrating women's experiential expertise alongside academic research, positioning women as co-researchers and co-decision-makers rather than merely beneficiaries. Strategic communication practices supporting such inclusion include community participatory research designs, platforms enabling women to articulate knowledge directly to policymakers, and communication products reflecting women's perspectives and priorities.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that strategic communication functions as an essential infrastructure for building knowledge ecosystems supporting gender-inclusive economic empowerment in Northern Nigeria. Research findings indicate that effective collaborative research depends on integrated communication planning, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and commitment to translating findings into policy and practice action. Strategic communication interventions can effectively challenge socio-cultural barriers when grounded in dialogic engagement, community participation, and respect for cultural contexts. However, realizing strategic communication's potential requires addressing systemic gaps in knowledge ecosystem functioning including limited mechanisms for validating diverse knowledge, inadequate cross-sector dialogue platforms, weak institutional incentives for collaboration, and fragmented funding mechanisms.

The research contributes essential scholarship on transformative communication for gender-equitable development by positioning strategic communication as a constitutive practice rather than a peripheral function. In African contexts facing substantial development challenges, including persistent gender inequalities constraining economic progress, communication practices shape whether research and policy effectively advance transformation or reproduce existing inequalities. This study demonstrates that intentional, strategic communication is indispensable for development effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations emerge for research, policy, and practice stakeholders. First, government agencies should establish dedicated

governance structures and funding mechanisms supporting long-term knowledge ecosystem development rather than episodic research projects. These structures must clarify roles and accountability among research institutions, government agencies, and civil society organizations while creating incentives for sustained collaboration. Second, academic institutions should reform research evaluation and reward systems recognizing and valuing engaged scholarship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and communication with non-academic stakeholders. Promotion and tenure criteria should include consideration of research impact on policy and practice, not merely academic publications.

Third, development organizations and donors should fund integrated approaches combining research, strategic communication, and ecosystem strengthening rather than isolated activities. Funding mechanisms should support multi-year partnerships enabling sustained stakeholder engagement and iterative learning. Fourth, knowledge ecosystem development initiatives must incorporate intentional strategies ensuring women's meaningful participation in decision-making, research processes, and communication product development. Mechanisms validating diverse knowledge forms, particularly women's experiential expertise, should be embedded throughout ecosystem functioning. Finally, communication practitioners in government, civil society, and academic institutions should receive training in dialogic, participatory, and culturally-sensitive communication approaches supporting gender-transformative development. Building communication capacity across sectors is essential for realizing knowledge ecosystems' potential.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AND TRAUMATIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AMONG JOURNALISTS COVERING BANDITRY STATES IN NORTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Journalists in Nigeria encounter traumatic incidences while performing their duties. Specifically, those that cover some Northwestern states that experience insecurity and terror attacks by Banditry groups (Egwu, 2016). In view of this situation, this paper examined the extent to which Journalists operating in Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states face psychological trauma and investigate their knowledge on traumatic management strategies. The paper adapted Three sessions of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and engaged a group of journalists in each of the three states. Guided by the Trauma theory and Social Support Theory, the study found that: Journalists operating in the Banditry affected states are at higher risk of trauma, due to exposure to conflict and tragic events; that Journalists in the affected states have no adequate knowledge of traumatic management strategies; and traumatic victims among Journalists are at risk of post traumatic disorders due to continuous experience of the causal factors and lack of support from the concerned authorities. Furthermore, Physical and digital attacks are the major factors responsible for psychological trauma among Journalists. In addition, psychological trauma cases are being under reported in the affected states. Based on these finding, the paper recommended that, Journalists covering Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states should strive to seek for knowledge on traumatic management strategies; traumatic victims among the Journalists should be giving adequate support to protect them from developing post trauma disorders; and that there is need for reporting cases of psychological trauma among Journalists covering the affected states.

Keywords: Journalists, Psychological trauma, Management strategies, Northwestern Nigeria

Introduction

Northern region of Nigeria in the last two to three decades experienced devastating insecurity that claimed thousands of lives and have resulted to loss of properties worth billions of naira, thereby rendering millions of people homeless, which forced them to become local refugees known as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) (Ladan and Matawalli, 2020).

In the recent years, Northwestern States of Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto have faced escalating security challenges of armed banditry, including incessant attacks on towns and villages, killings of the innocent people, kidnappings for ransom and embargo on farming of foods crops, which put lives of the people in deplorable conditions (Adam and Akote, 2020). Journalists reporting in these states often found themselves on the frontlines of conflict, regularly exposed to disturbing events and life-threatening situations. Following these insecurity challenges, Journalists covering the affected states are prone to psychological trauma due to exposure to tragic events such as contact with dead bodies, people with serious injuries, and deplorable life conditions of the Internally Displaced Persons IDP's. The constant exposure to tragic events placed them at the significant risk of psychological trauma, a condition that can profoundly affect their mental health, job performance and overall well-being. The psychological trauma among Journalists in the affected states is significant to the extent that they may be experiencing emotional and physical effects of the trauma such as stress, anxiety, depression, irritability, confusion and other mental health issues. Despite the vital role they play in informing the public and holding power to account, the mental health needs of journalists in these high-risk areas remain largely unaddressed (Akote, 2021).

In view of the situation, this study seeks to explore the extent to which Journalists in the Northwestern Nigeria faces psychological trauma, to assess their knowledge level of psychological trauma management strategies, and to evaluate their experiences of psychological trauma. This study covered the Northwestern sub-region with a focus on three banditry affected states of Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto, also with an emphasis on the psychological trauma and traumatic management strategies among Journalists in the affected states. To attain the set objectives, the paper adopted Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as a method of data collection from the target Respondents (Journalists covering Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states). Three sessions of FGDs were conducted with selected Journalists from the three states.

Problem Statement

Journalists Reporting from conflict prone regions in Nigeria, particularly Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto states, are exposed to horrific events such as brutal killings of

innocent people, kidnappings of people for ransom, incessant violent attacks on towns and villages. Exposure and intense pressure from these tragic events put Journalists at higher risk of developing psychological trauma which can affect their mental health (Akote, 2021). The three Northwestern States have become epicenter of armed banditry due to increase rate of insurgency related violence that significantly affect the safety and psychological well-being of Media practitioners operating in the region.

Despite playing a critical role in informing the public and shaping discourse around security and development issues, Journalists working in these States often operate under intense psychological pressure, they are frequently exposed to distressing scenes, life-threatening encounters, and traumatic narratives without adequate emotional support, protective equipment, or institutional safeguards (Egwu, 2016). The prolonged exposure to such traumatic events, coupled with the threat of violence or retribution, contributes to heightened levels of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and burnout.

Psychological trauma among journalists in Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto states remained under researched and insufficiently addressed by both media, organizations and government agencies, which gave rise to the need for research works to find out issues for possible solutions (McMahon and Pyevich, 2012). Furthermore, there is lack of structured mental health support, debriefing protocols, or trauma informed training for field reporters and correspondents, which can compromise their professional performance, personal well-being, and long-term career sustainability (Ladan, & Matawalli, 2020).

The significant nature of the situation increased concerns among national and international communities and attracted attention of the Nigerian Union of Journalists NUJ, Media Rights Agenda (MRA) and Civil Liberty Organization among other Human rights and Civil society groups who are calling for the government to as matter of urgency take proactive measures to protect Journalists operating in the affected States from tragic events that could put them in danger of developing psychological trauma (Anaeto & Solo-Anaeto, 2009).

This study is built upon the need to examine the extent of psychological trauma and knowledge on traumatic management strategies among journalists in Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine psychological trauma and knowledge of traumatic management strategies among journalists covering Katsina and Zamfara States. Hence, the objectives to accomplish the aim are to examine the extent to which journalists covering Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states are at risk of developing psychological trauma;

identify the sources of psychological trauma among Journalists covering Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states and assess the knowledge level of psychological trauma management strategies among Journalists covering Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states.

Scope of the Study

This study covered psychological trauma and traumatic management strategies among Journalists covering Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto states of Northwestern region of Nigeria.

Geographically, the study is limited to Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto States within the Northwestern region of Nigeria. These states were selected due to their frequent exposure to insecurity, banditry, and violent incidents, which have placed journalists working there at a heightened risk of psychological trauma. All other journalists in Nigeria, outside these states, are excluded from the study.

Psychological Trauma among Journalists in Northern Nigeria

The term Trauma originates from the Greek word *troma*, meaning "wound" (Psychological Care & Healing, 2017). The American Psychological Association (2018) defined Trauma as an emotional response to a terrible event, such as violence, rape or natural disasters. Trauma may result in a range of emotional and physiological symptoms, such as anxiety and emotional numbness, to a more severe disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). However, Psychological or emotional trauma refers to damage inflicted on a person's psyche due to distressing or life-threatening events. These events impair a person's ability to cope or function normally (Akote, 2019).

Australian Psychological Society, APS (2020) observed that Journalists reporting from high-risk regions like Northeast and Northwest Nigeria often exhibit trauma symptoms that vary in exposure and resilience. APS further revealed that Symptoms of psychological trauma may manifest in physical (e.g., fatigue, hypervigilance, heart palpitations), cognitive (e.g., intrusive memories, confusion), behavioral (e.g., avoidance, withdrawal), and emotional forms (e.g., anger, depression, panic attacks). However, Dangana and Adamu (2021) identified symptoms commonly observed among conflict reporters, which include dizziness, excessive sweating, heart palpitations, and chronic fatigue. These are not just stress responses, but indicators of deeper psychological distress resulting from recurring exposure to violence and insecurity. Aiyetan (2021) also identified multiple trauma causes or triggers affecting journalists in Northern Nigeria. The common cause is the brutal killings, journalists' frequent exposure to dead bodies and gruesome scenes of violence that put them in traumatic dangers. Another cause is the Kidnappings of people for ransom, Journalists' witnessed experiences and close contact with affected persons. Additionally, physical and digital attacks cause trauma among Journalists; Assaults by

bandits, hired thugs, or even security operatives, along with threatening messages and calls are triggers of trauma against Journalists. Besides Journalists themselves, threats against family members make them to develop compounded stress when their families are targeted.

Journalists bear a constitutional and societal obligation to inform, educate, and enlighten the public at local, national, and international levels (Aiyetan, 2021). However, while fulfilling this duty, many journalists are exposed to hostile environments, physical danger, and psychological strain. According to a Report by Committee to Protect Journalists (2022) in regions such as Northern Nigeria, the threat landscape includes not only violent physical attacks but also digital threats and trauma-induced encounters that severely affect their mental health and professional effectiveness. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2022), journalists working in states such as Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto face multiple trauma-inducing challenges. One major source of trauma is reporting from bandit hideouts, where journalists risk abduction and exposure to live gunfire, as exemplified by the tragic case of the late journalist Sani Abdullahi Tsafe.

Another source of psychological distress arises from towns under siege by bandits. CPJ notes that journalists covering communities under active bandit control face significant emotional strain due to constant exposure to violence and persistent threats. The graphic scenes of brutality encountered during field reporting, such as mass killings and injured victims, also contribute to deep emotional scars (Aiyetan, 2022).

Moreover, kidnappings and threats both personal and directed toward journalists' families remain major sources of trauma, as those reporting on abductions frequently become targets themselves. However, living and working in persistently hostile environments fosters a continuous state of fear, insecurity, and psychological exhaustion, leading to chronic anxiety and emotional fatigue among journalists in these regions.

Ghassabi and Zare-Farashbandi (2023) noted that journalists have continued to risk their lives in order to discharge their roles as information providers of happenings for public. Succeeding in this challenging profession, require skills and proper knowledge of risk management and safety protocols, either those developed by the professional bodies or those creatively adopted by journalists themselves. The importance of media cannot be underestimated because of its central role in the dissemination of information on issues happening in the society. Mass Media do not only bring the daily happenings to the knowledge of the citizens; they also survey the environment and set agenda for the public discourse. through surveillance function, media scans the environment and report dangers to citizens. Against this backdrop, mass media have become a vital part of social, political, economic, and environmental situations. Furthermore, the Scholars believed that the role

of the mass media in any crisis or disaster cannot be denied, as the media facilitate access to information for government, policy makers and the citizens.

African Security Review (2023) in a Study that examined the safety and psychological risks faced by journalists in volatile Northeastern Nigeria affirmed that Trauma literacy for Journalists is of paramount importance especially for journalists covering conflict zones in Northern Nigeria. It found that journalists operate without formal safety mechanisms, relying on instinct, making them vulnerable to both physical and psychological harm. The study recommended mainstreaming safety education in journalism programs and increased organizational support like training, counselling and provision of protective gear. Although focused on conflict areas like Borno and Adamawa, the conclusions apply equally to journalists operating in the Northwestern states dealing with banditry such as Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto.

In May (2023) Scholars during a round table discussion at the Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ) emphasized the importance of embedding trauma literacy in journalism education curriculum in the Universities and other Higher Institutions across Nigeria and Africa in general. This includes training future and current Journalists to recognize work-related trauma and develop coping mechanisms, supported by simulation tools, seminars, and peer support networks

Flannery (2024) emphasized also that effective trauma management for Journalists should be multi-dimensional; pointing out that the first traumatic management strategy entails physical healthcare, relaxation techniques and reducing exposure to trauma triggers. The second traumatic management strategy is the seeking for professional help, noting that engagement in therapy such as Trauma-Focused CBT or EMDR when needed could help journalists to manage trauma. Another Traumatic management strategy is building support systems which requires engagement in peer-support groups and community activities to foster resilience. Furthermore, one of the best Traumatic management strategies is the Symptom Awareness; Journalists are encouraged to learn about trauma symptoms for effective self-care and management.

Empirical Review

McMahon and Pyevich (2012) examined the impact covering a variety of traumatic events had on journalists. McMahon studied two groups of journalists, one group that had reported on traumatic events within the previous three years (e.g. war, robberies, riots, rapes, and homicides) and other group that had not reported on such events in the previous three years. The results of the study indicated that some journalists experienced distress, such as intrusive recollections of the events, avoidance of reminders of the events; and symptoms of depression, following their coverage of trauma, tragedy, and disaster. In

addition, some of these journalists noted sustained distress that had persisted for several years.

Freinkel, Koopman, and Spiegel (2017) assessed 18 journalists who witnessed and reported on an execution, a single-incident stressor. One month after the execution, many of the journalists reported several short-term difficulties with dissociation, anxiety, and depression (e.g., a few days of increased tearfulness immediately following the event). However, none of the reporters endorsed severe or long-lasting psychological problems related to having witnessed the execution (i.e., distress lasting for more than a few days). Yet, Freinkel et al (2017) noted that the journalists did experience distresses following the execution, even though the journalists themselves were not at risk, the event was socially sanctioned and the witnesses had time to psychologically prepare themselves.

Flannery (2021) evaluated news journalists and posttraumatic stress disorder: a review of literature, 2011—2020. The study postulates that first responders may develop psychological trauma! Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the performance of their duties. The researcher insisted that a study of this nature is often overlooked especially in these studies of police, firefighters, and paramedics also, news journalists and photojournalists are not left out.

Furthermore, Hoak (2021) carried out a study covering COVID-19: journalists' stress and perceived organizational support while reporting on the pandemic. The study observed that the COVID-19 pandemic forced unprecedented changes upon journalists in the United States, as they attempted to cover the story while adhering to the same stay-at-home orders as the rest of the public. This study used organizational support theory to investigate the stress associated with the logistics of coverage early in the pandemic and how perceived organizational support played a role in either alleviating or adding to that stress. In total, 222 journalists responded to a survey sent out during the first few weeks of the stay-at-home orders issued across the United States. Results revealed varying degrees of logistical support provided by news organizations with nearly one quarter receiving no supplies, technology, or extra training at all. 72% perceived organizational support was associated with lower levels of stress and higher levels of work commitment. Female journalists and those who were younger and less experienced felt significantly more stress associated with pandemic coverage.

Theoretical Framework

This Study is grounded in Psychological and Sociological Theories that explained how individuals experience, internalize and respond to traumatic events. Journalists, particularly those covering war zones, natural disasters, violence, and human suffering, are repeatedly exposed to vicarious trauma, which can result in long-term psychological

effects. Within this theory, vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue are especially relevant. Vicarious trauma refers to the internal transformation that occurs in individuals who engage empathetically with survivors of trauma (McCann & Pearlman, 1990), while compassion fatigue describes the emotional exhaustion resulting from chronic exposure to others' trauma (Figley, 1995). The Theoretical framework is designed primarily from the concept of Trauma theory, which posits that exposure to overwhelming events either directly or indirectly can lead to significant disruptions in emotional and cognitive functioning (Caruth, 1996).

Additionally, Social Support Theory is included to understand coping mechanisms and resilience. This theory emphasizes that individuals with strong social and organizational support are better equipped to manage stress and trauma. Newsroom culture, peer support, and access to counseling resources can therefore serve as protective factors. Together, these theoretical lenses provide a comprehensive foundation for examining how repeated exposure to trauma affects journalists' mental health, how workplace structures contribute to or mitigate these effects, and what interventions can be designed to promote resilience and well-being.

The adoption of Psychological and Sociological theories in this study is grounded in their capacity to explain how individuals experience, internalize, and respond to traumatic events within both personal and social contexts. Since journalists operate at the intersection of individual emotional response and collective organizational structures, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of trauma exposure in journalism.

Integration and Relevance to the Study

The integration of these theories ensures a comprehensive understanding that bridges individual psychological processes (as explained by Trauma Theory, Vicarious Trauma, and Compassion Fatigue) with social and structural dynamics (as emphasized by Social Support Theory). Together, they justify a multi-dimensional analysis of journalists' trauma capturing both the internal emotional toll and the external social context that influences coping and recovery.

In summary, these theories are appropriate because they compliment each other in explaining the nature and impact of trauma experienced by journalists; they also provide insight into psychological mechanisms underlying vicarious exposure; highlight the role of social and organizational support in resilience; and offer a framework for designing interventions that promote journalists' mental well-being and professional sustainability.