

## **Pagmata: Awareness of Communication Students in Davao City on the Safety of Filipino Journalists**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Media and journalism remain a pivotal tool in disseminating information by promoting participation among members of society. However, despite the ratified mechanisms to ensure journalist welfare, the Philippines still rank high on the Global Impunity Index. Over the years, journalists have been subjected to natural and human threats. The researchers employed a creative research format in the conduct of this study. Communication majors from one of the academic institutions in Davao City and journalism professionals working in academe participated in the interview in an attempt to understand their awareness on the perils of journalism practice. The proponents found that Communication majors are much aware of the dangers that come along with this profession. Although student interviewees have varying understanding, heightened practical involvement is one of the solutions both professionals and communication majors considered. Furthermore, understanding on this matter encourages both civil society and authority to establish safety measures that protect journalistic endeavors, hence ensuring the welfare of these vanguards of truth facilitates peace, democracy, and freedom of the press.

**Keywords:** *journalist killings, harassment, abduction, illegal arrest, communication students*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Free access to media remains a pivotal societal instrument in establishing multilateral social collaboration through transformative mechanisms that permeate diverse civil society's several facets (Riaz et al. 93). On average, at least one journalist is assassinated every five days concerning their public duty of uncovering information to the general public even at the height of multilateral mechanisms that ensure the security of people in the industry based on the data from UNESCO under the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity framework. The safety net leverages standard-setting and policymaking, awareness-raising, monitoring and reporting, capacity building, academic research, and coalition building.

Attacks on journalist safety include abductions, murder, harassment, intimidation, illegal arrest, and arbitrary detention (UNESCO: Safety of Journalists).

In the global arena, as a vaccine against disinformation, journalism is 73% ultimately or partly blocked in 180 countries, as established by the 2021 World Press Freedom Index. It is a private institution that supports the UN framework and condemns impunity for crimes against the media, as it fuels the deprivation of information and tarnishes press freedom (Reporters Without Borders; United Nations News; UNESCO). Meanwhile, the national index of journalist safety remains on the poor stature of global safety statistics. The World Press Freedom Index revealed that the Philippines ranked 138th among 180 countries in 2021 based on their data that measured the level of freedom afforded to journalists (Ragrario 8). In the locality of the Davao Region, journalist killing is an inescapable reality that continues to haunt the local press industry. On October 20, 2021, a local journalist named Orlando Dinoy fell victim to a media- motivated murder. He was a well-known community reporter for Newslines. Ph and a block-timer at Energy FM, covering community development news and crimes (*Crouch*).

Academic institutions and concerned organizations established several studies about the status of media killings in the country, particularly the implementation of legally binding mechanisms. Nevertheless, recent studies need to rationalize the significance of public awareness in the fight for press freedom, against the culture of impunity, and the security of media workers in the practice field, as anchored in the UN Plan of Action. Hence, this journalistic research attempts to measure the awareness level of aspiring media practitioners on the issue of journalist safety, considering their exposure to journalism and mass communication. The recent studies are structured in a generalized approach and extensive scope. It is essential to narrow down the study parameter, mainly because crucial stakeholders have recorded several journalist killings in Davao City, which concern aspiring practitioners from different universities around the locale—including the Communication majors from one of the academic institutions in Davao City.

The primary objective of this study is to determine the awareness of Communication students enrolled in one of the academic institutions in Davao City on the safety of Filipino journalists. At the end of this research endeavor, the researchers strove to answer the following questions: (1) How well do Communication students understand the current state of Philippine journalists? (2) How aware are Communication students of the factors (harassment, abduction, illegal arrest) that contribute to the safety of journalists? (3) How does the awareness of Communication major students differ based on their year level?

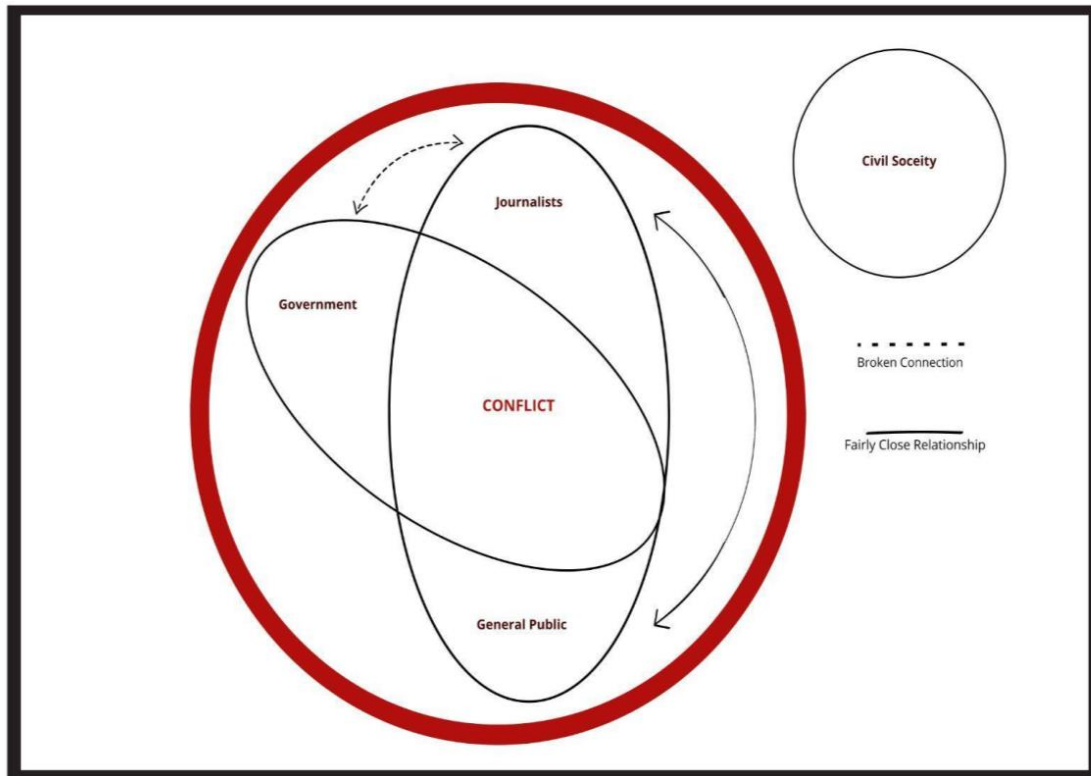
This study provides information that discourses the awareness of Bachelor of Arts in Communication students in different year levels regarding the safety of journalists, which determines the aspects that establish better approaches in a global setting. Data gathered contribute to understanding the international circumstances, and the result determines an individual's awareness of the safety of various media practitioners, especially in Mindanao.

This study also provides more insights concerning the journalists' safety and allows the community to understand the plight of journalists against human threats. The gathered data is used to discover or form an improved method of analyzing how journalism works in the media industry and to educate future media professionals regarding the matter. It enables communicators to profoundly understand the skirmish behind journalists and the people involved in the culture of impunity against journalists. It provides researchers with a baseline knowledge in recognizing the dire situation that incapacitates journalists in their everyday life.

The researchers discovered that only a few studies have put up research regarding the safety of journalists in Mindanao, especially on the community's awareness. As anchored on the UN Plan of Action, public awareness affects how journalists reach the public and media practitioners are viewed (UNESCO: Safety of Journalists). The public benefits as they acquire new understanding through this study, which promotes journalists as watchdogs of truth and protectors of democracy. Also, Communication students do well in this study because it provides a compact body of facts that enable safety nets in their future professional fields. Hence, the researchers aimed to dig deeper into the knowledge of the Communication students in this matter since it helps improve future references.

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are the Attention Schema Theory of Charles Bartlett (1932), which seeks to understand the possibility and natural function of our subjective consciousness and describes how the mind organizes memories, information, and knowledge that divides things into categories and makes it easy for us to navigate into the information era (Pappas; Graziano); the Standpoint Theory of Patricia Hill Collins and Sandra Harding (1990) that discusses whether knowledge emerges from socio-economic status, geographical area, sex, and diversity in viewpoint particularly from the marginalized sector ("Standpoint Theory | Definition, Approaches, and Facts"; Admin); Situation Awareness Theory by Mica Endsley (1980s), which implies that situational awareness is when we pick up cues from around us and then put them together to make sense of what is happening then use that to predict what will happen next (Pew and Mavor; Coolfire); the Attribution Theory of Fritz Heider (1958) that proposes people are "naive" specialists who try to take advantage of the world by determining the origins of specific causes for both themselves and other people ("Attributions," "Attribution Theory," and McLeod's "Attribution Theory- Situational vs Dispositional | Simply Psychology"); and Realism for Film Theory, a form of filmmaking that prioritizes narrative material as the primary means of distribution (School of Media Arts; McConnell, Ph.D.).

**Figure 1**  
*CSJ Actor's Map*



The researchers used the actor's map as the Conflict Sensitive Journalism (CSJ) framework, also known as Stakeholders' Mapping, to determine the actors and their perspectives that directly or indirectly affect a conflict, including those directly or indirectly affected by its consequences and the key actors in the resolution. In this study, four competing actors were directly involved in the treacherous media practice and in the pursuit of curtailing the systemic threats to media professionals. The two direct actors are journalists (A) and political/prominent individuals (B) who are competing to attain their respective interests, whether it be political, social responsibility, and vested motives. Hence, conflicts arise amidst their clashing rationales. Meanwhile, civil society (C) and the general public (D) intervene in the resolution procedures. Institutions ratify laws and policies to protect the people in media, especially the role of public awareness in promoting journalist safety.

Actors (B) are involved in the threats to the media profession (A), which endangers the rights of journalists and democracy enshrined to the general public (B). Hence, legally binding frameworks promulgated by civil society (C) and government institutions contribute to highlighting the role of public awareness, which shuns human threats to journalist safety in return ("UNESCO: Safety of Journalists").

The researchers utilized Actor's Mapping to identify the relevant people and institutions involved in the perils of journalism practice. The Actors Map tools enable the researchers to establish an action plan and propose possible routes of interventions—through joint participation and partnership of journalism institutions, civil society, and the general public. It allows the researchers to understand the significance of an informed public (especially future media professionals) in promoting security among journalists. ("How To Do Actors Mapping: Requirement and Process"; Rama and Gürten 54). The following paragraphs contain visual references for this study: music, documentaries, series, and trends on the Internet.

**Figure 2**

*Thumbnail of Award-Winning Filmmaker Ramona Diaz's Feature Film, "A Thousand Cuts" (2011)*



*A Thousand Cuts*. It is a film by award-winning filmmaker Ramona Diaz, which talks about the crackdown on press freedom, the persecution of Chief Executive Officer Maria Ressa and her colleagues, and the role of online disinformation and its impact on democracy (Frontline PBS: "A Thousand Cuts"). Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was accused of extrajudicial killings, but he also defended his actions by implying his campaign promise to rid the country of drugs and crime. The film documents Philippine journalist Maria Ressa and her publication Rappler as they investigate thousands of alleged government-sanctioned murders of primarily poor people accused of using or selling drugs. In this searing film, Ressa and her fearless team risked their freedom to defend truth and democracy (Human Rights Watch: "A Thousand Cuts").

**Figure 3**

Thumbnail of GMA 7's Award-Winning Documentary Show, "i-Witness" (2022)



*I-Witness*. The researchers used i-Witness as a visual reference in storytelling. This television documentary program narrates the underbellies of society, the plight of Filipinos against poverty, and social hierarchy disparities. The show was hosted by award-winning documentarists Howie Severino, Kara David, Atom Araullo, and Sandra Aguinaldo. It remains the Philippines' longest- running and most-awarded documentary show (*GMA7 I-Witness*).

**Figure 4**

Thumbnail of VICE Asia's *The Untouchable Chaebols of South Korea / Open Secret* (2022)



*The Untouchable Chaebols of South Korea | Open Secrets*. Aside from "A Thousand Cuts" and "Reporter's Notebook," the researchers use VICE Asia's "The Untouchable Chaebols of South Korea | Open Secrets" as a visual reference for the camera shots, angles used, and flow. It premiered on VICE Asia's YouTube channel on August 13, 2022, and has reached one million views since it was posted online. This documentary series seeks to discuss society's secrets lived out in the open, things that everyone knows about but nobody dares talk about. It is also the reason behind the researchers' decision to use this video as inspiration for the documentary, as it shares the same objective with the study— to discuss societal issues that are kept hidden by society or from society.

## METHOD

### Research Design

The researchers used a creative format in this study, specifically the arts- based methods ("*A Brief Guide to Creative Research*"). It is generally acknowledged that producing artwork is a legitimate research outcome in and of itself because it embodies and communicates the knowledge generated in its development (Kara 54). Creative research cognates the emerging field which looks up to developing new techniques of understanding and redefining knowledge in a digital age. Research is an activity of extrapolating the unknown and uncertainty, and the link between uncertainty and creativity has mushroomed new ideals and concepts (Levy et al.; Grishin; & Todres qt. in Kara 13). Hence, innovative research leverages existing knowledge and redefines concepts through artistic and objective frameworks. The data were gathered through a documentary anchored with an interview format as a form of art in adherence to the creative approach of this study.

### Research Participants

For this qualitative study, the inclusion criteria of the participants include undergraduate Communication Arts majors from the selected university and journalists teaching in the academe. According to a study, the ideal characteristic of communication students is that they are well-suited to serve as participants since they are future professionals in journalistic endeavors ("*Perception on Ideal Qualities of a Communication Student*"). Furthermore, the selected sampling method of the researchers is purposive sampling. Using this strategy, the researchers selected four students from the population to participate (Business Research Methodology). Meanwhile, going over the specified criteria above is subject to the exclusion criteria: one must be a Communication student from the university mentioned above and a professional with teaching credits.

### Research Instrument

The researchers applied the tools found from scholarly websites and offline applications downloaded on the internet like the Sony Vegas Pro 17, which are beneficial for data gathering through an interview via Microsoft Teams. The researchers also used interview guide

questionnaires during the conduct of the interview based on the research questions. Identifying and probing questions were used to gather data, relevant to the study objectives. During the production process, the audio and raw video outputs were edited in editing software, namely, Sony Vegas Pro 17 and Adobe Premiere, and used equipment for recordings like DSLR cameras, tripod, and audio recorder.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

This research underwent a procedure that guided the researchers in conducting a systematic investigation regarding awareness of Communication students from one of the academic institutions in Davao City about the safety of journalists. Art-based data collection techniques were used during the production as these helped the participants speak freely regarding matters that are baffling for anyone to put into words. The researchers adapted the procedure Kallos in February 2022 regarding data gathering. They sought permission from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Education at a university in Davao City through a letter addressed to the participants. The letter notified that the study is conducted before the final examination until the extension dates for missed examinations, which allowed participants to conceive and develop a solidified relationship with the researchers.

Additionally, the researchers randomly selected one representative from each year level for the interview; the participants were provided with a clear inquest that enabled them to focus within the allocated time, which gave researchers a better understanding to determine the results fully. Furthermore, the researchers did follow-up prompts to cast light upon underlying ideas and to deepen their observations on the various standpoints of communication students. A letter of consent was provided to the participant to ensure their permission to use their statements solely for the study. Beyond the premise sanctions grounds for appropriate consequences (*Arts-based data collection techniques - program evaluation*).

### **Production Method**

The process involves identifying distinct steps that establish the foundation for content creation applicable to all media types. The phases of the procedure are not static or linear; rather they are iterative and interconnected. The media production process is supported by continuous monitoring, contemplation, and analyzation, which necessitates crucial, imaginative, and conceptual understanding (*Media Production Process*).

*Pre-Production Stage.* Pre-production entails conceptualizing and organizing ideas, equipment, and human resources. It is necessary to pre-empt future revamps during the shoot and develop a safety net to ensure the product's success. Therefore, you will be able to envision your output and timeline during the whole process (Jamaluddin 1-3). Below are some of the pre-production procedures the researchers employed to guarantee the progress of the documentary show.



*Conceptualization.* The researchers created a documentary output entitled "PAGMATA: Seeing the Unseen" and underwent rigorous research about the said topic to choose a subject they are passionate about. By skimming through various research materials and identifying the subjects of the documentary, the researchers created the context for the said output ("*Learn about documentary filmmaking: How to Research a Documentary*").

*Casting.* For the participants, the researchers interviewed one random representative from each level of the communication arts program. They also interviewed media practitioners to investigate their knowledge and experience about said career. In this documentary, the casts were the real-life individuals whose experiences the researchers wish to share and discuss ("*Casting Your Documentary: Choosing Wisely Can Strengthen Storytelling by Sheila Curran Bernard - Student.*").

*Collaboration with Crew.* The majority of the time that the researchers discussed was spent online via Messenger and Microsoft Teams, which allowed them to collect information and materials needed for the study. Critical problems, questions, and developments were highlighted and considered throughout these discussions. It was anticipated that there would be a need for the workload to be divided among the members. By doing this, the entire process was organized, and the objectives were completed on time ("*The Art of Building Your Crew and Collaborating Effectively.*").

*Locations.* This documentary was conducted online due to the COVID-19 restrictions to ground the study under ethical rules and for the betterment of public health. The researchers interviewed via Microsoft Teams ("*COVID-19 Risk Assessment for Documentary Filmmakers.*").

*Production Design.* This documentary is in the style of a news magazine. Shooting in a studio was not necessary, so online interviews were conducted. Due to COVID-19 constraints, the b-rolls were filmed observing health protocols (Dean; *Consider Alternative Approaches.*).

*Logistics.* This study's whole production method was undertaken online via Messenger and Microsoft Teams for convenient communication. Therefore, a high-speed internet connection was essential for this to complete the planning process instantly (Ohba et al.).

*Production Stage.* To put the concepts and plans created during the pre-production into action, the production process entailed recording or filming the footage and scenes that may be seen in the documentary (Lone Star College "*Video Production Process*"). The B-rolls were shot inside the university premises, including the facility, communication majors working in the laboratory, and university students in general.

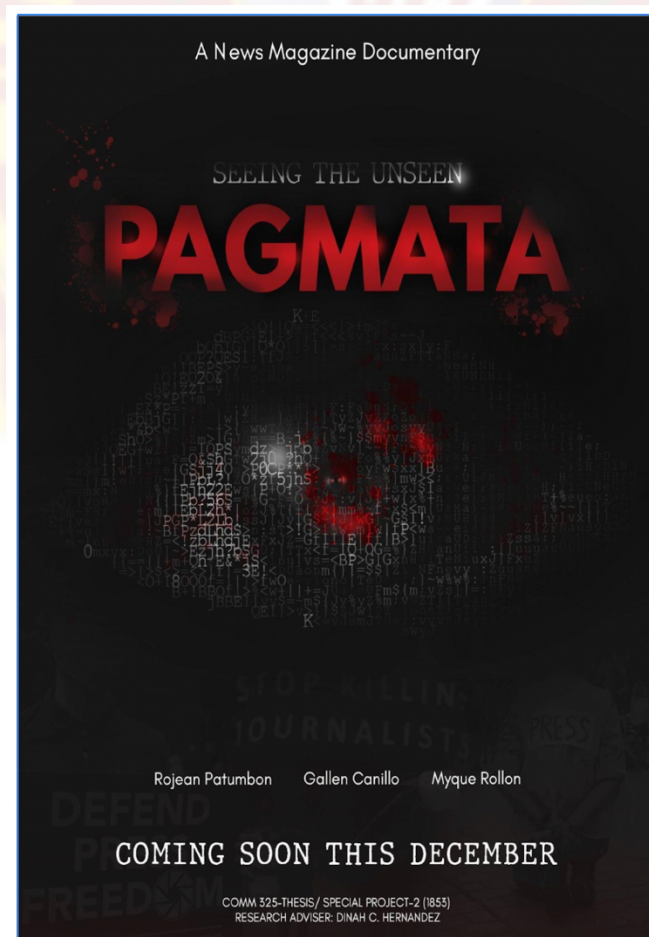
*Post-Production Stage.* The editor used editing software like Sony Vegas Pro 17 and Adobe Premiere to add transitions, collate shots, and make rough cuts. At the same time, the editor used Adobe After Effects to create processed photography easily, add digital visual effects and motion picture compositing, and animate the documentary's approved title and text animations. Canva was used for the poster and graphic illustrations. Lastly, the editor used Audacity for audio editing for sound quality.

In most cases, the editing software mentioned above was put in a good word by the professional video and audio editing software for their top-notch features. For that reason, not by any means that the editor of this study turn to and adopts other editing software that is not mentioned earlier, which could result in unacceptable standards for the final output.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Documentary Output

**Figure 5**  
*Documentary Output*



Documentary Title: PAGMATA  
Segment: Seeing the Unseen  
Final Medium: Sony Vegas Pro 17

The documentary "Pagmata" included a 15-minute segment called "Seeing the Unseen." Investigative and explanatory journalism is the broadcasting discipline researchers use to narrow the critical narratives of the participants with varying academic and professional backgrounds in journalism. The primary objective of investigative journalism is to uncover the truth and make public issues kept secret from someone in power. Meanwhile, explanatory journalism highlights the subtle nuances of a news item, the reason behind it, its origin, its impact, and, most importantly, what it means to the general populace and the community at large (UNESCO; Vankin).

Relevant sets of questions on the awareness of communication students regarding the safety of journalists in the Philippines were given to the selected participants. The documentary included several news snippets regarding media professionals and sound recordings of the interviewees' statements. The appearance of the title then followed the introduction of the student participants. Their views and opinions on journalism were then expressed. After presenting the student statements, the media professionals were introduced and presented their observations. The interviews should be conducted honestly and objectively in pursuit of honesty. The documentary concluded with a closing remark from the participants, to wrap up the project.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The researchers thoroughly examined the participants' responses after editing the documentary to find the answers to the research questions. The researchers developed two sets of interview questions, one for communication students and the other for media professionals who teach in academe. The researchers presented three research questions, each with a corresponding identifying and probing question. In the first research question the researchers wanted to assess the awareness of communication students on the current state of Filipino journalists thus, for the first identifying under research question one on the set of questions for communication students, the researcher asked the interviewees what they know about journalism. Ms. Lamban stated that journalists are the watchdog and voice of the masses, much like how Hanitzsch described where he said that journalists are committed vanguards and watchdogs of the truth through normative, cognitive, practiced, and narrated approaches 3.

**Figure 6**

*Screenshot of Interview with Ms. Therence Mae Lamban on Her Awareness of the Current State of Philippine Journalism*



*“It is the watchdog and the voice of the mass, watchdog, because it is the responsibility of the Filipino journalists or the journalists to keep an eye on the governance on the current umm- every current administration and of course the voice of the mass because for every story that they tell or they share it came from the masses.”*

Meanwhile, the second identifying and probing question discussed the current state of Philippine journalism, including the basis for why they think it is the current state. Therence Mae Lamban agreed that practicing journalism in our country is dangerous; Arao supports this argument as he posits that the Philippine media is often characterized as one of the freest in Asia but remains one of the most dangerous places to practice journalism. However, Aisha Magapisa argued that journalism in our country is improving as the private sector and several stakeholders joined hands from 2018-2019 to deliberate and plot a national action plan on the security of journalists in our country ("The Philippines Launches National Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists"). Below is the statement of Ms. Therence Mae Lamban on the current state of Philippine journalism.

*“Based on, umm based on my observation the Philippines... They're being attacked and sometimes discriminated.”*

*“Okay, what is my basis, siguro simple lang like, you know that we are in the digital platform and so the use of social media platforms is prevalent.”* (OK, what is my basis? Maybe, it's simple like we know that we are in the digital platform and so the use of social media platforms)

**Figure 7**

*Screenshot of Interview with Ms. Aisha Magapisa on Her Awareness of the Current State of Philippine Journalism*



*“I think for me it's getting better for some news channel or broadcasting channel”*

*“I think, one I think one of my basis was the happening on the recent election.”*

Furthermore, on the third identifying and probing question, students were asked what they thought of the country's journalism practice and whether they found it challenging. All participants strongly indicated that practicing journalism is challenging. In addition, Ms. Magapisa and Mr. Amoroso expressed their ideas on improving journalistic practice in our country. In response to this, PPASJ included in one of its five pillars the development of a comprehensive and protective mechanism by incorporating media protection into academic curricula—in pursuit of the UN Plan of Action that supports the journalism profession (UNESCO: Safety of Journalists). Below are the statements of Ms. Aisha Magapisa and Mr. Russell Amoroso on journalism practice in the Philippines.

*“Philippine journalism is challenging”*

*“Our country must focus on developing the discipline on the journalism practice of our country... we really need to be observant in presenting or delivering authentic news to the public.”*

**Figure 8**

*Screenshot of Interview with Mr. Russell Amoroso on Journalism Practice in the Philippines*



*“Para sa akosa man gud ang journalism is somehow, might be cheesy, nga uhhh buhay mo ang nakataga or buhay mo. And yes, Filipino journalists are challenged” (Your life is at stake when you are a journalist...Filipino journalists are challenged)*

*“Ang mga students—not just the students, but the people—also must practice or must apply the journalism practices for them to, you know, to have this very fair and balanced na journalism and also to provide information na accurate and accessible to everyone.” (Students—not just the students, but the people also—must practice or must apply the journalism practices for them to have this very fair and balanced journalism and also to provide information that is accurate and accessible to everyone.)*

The participants' perceptions of the safety and security of journalists in the Philippines were questioned in the final identifying and probing question under research question one, as are their perceptions of journalists whose safety and security have been compromised. All participants agreed that their perception of journalist safety is unsafe, primarily when covering situations involving influential people and their followers. Ms. Magapisa stated that the nature of the work puts a journalist's safety at risk. On the other hand, Mr. Mondejar mentioned human threats such as red-tagging are the reasons why journalists' lives are at risk, which is supported by an article entitled "Respect Press Freedom, Protect Journalists, and our Democracy." It states that the Philippines, a democratic country, was regarded as one of the most dangerous places for journalism in the past years and had seen an increase in violent

incidents against journalists who had published controversial content. Below is the statement of Ms. Aisha Magapisa on the safety and security of journalists in the Philippines.

*“I think, some of the journalists or members of the media are receiving threats from the involved party or subject whenever they release something that is against involving someone but it's not only limited to human threats, actually, but also considering the nature of their work, which is always dangerous, that they need to risk their safety in order to produce a scoop, just like what happened in Marawi siege.”*

**Figure 9**

*Screenshot of Interview with Mr. Jeffrey Mondejar on the Safety and Security of Journalists in the Philippines*



*“Their life is really at risk, especially with what I've heard on the news few months ago that you know most of our journalists, for example a radio or radio broadcasters, you know they really ahhh shot dead and then they been red tagged. They've been like, you know, attacking the government.”*

*“Being a journalist is really like, you know, anytime, anywhere, your life is really at risk”*

The following questions are for the Communication students under research question two. The first identifying and probing question concerned their manner of checking news about journalist safety and how it affects their interest. Jeffrey Mondejar and Therence Lamban each declared that they rarely check news outlets. In contrast, Russell Amoroso said he regularly checks general news updates, including journalist safety. Moreover, Therence

asserted that this news did not affect their view of journalism. In contrast, Russel and Jeffrey disclosed that it alarms them. In the Situation Theory by Mica Endsley (1980s) mentioned earlier, the cues being picked up and put together by an individual lead to making useful predictions in the future, which Russell and Jeffrey signified. Below are the statements of Mr. Russell Amoroso, Mr. Jeffrey Mondejar, and Ms. Therence Lamban on checking news outlets about journalist safety.

*“How often? Daily? Every day? I read news, I read articles.”*

*“Kanang maka read ko ug, makaread ta ug mga news ba nga na’y nangamatay, na’y nakulong, it (it) alarms us.”* (Whenever we read news about slain journalists, illegally arrested, it alarms us)

*“But when it comes to the safety of the journalist (I) it's maybe really 3 times, 3 times a month.”*

*“Of course, based on the news, on the experiences of others.”*

*“Honestly, seldom.”*

*“If you mean na intentionally jud na to go and search about (the) safety, seldom.”* (If you mean like intentionally to go and search about the safety, seldom)

*“It didn't change. It scares me somehow, but it didn't change my thought of service.”*

For the second identifying and probing question, which discoursed their idea about the factors affecting the safety of the journalists, Therence believed that the factors which affect journalist safety are when they cover influential people. In comparison, Aisha specified that the factors include assault, harassment, kidnapping, and hostage-taking. In the article from UNESCO: Safety of Journalists presented above, on most days, the journalists uncovering information to the public are assassinated, where attacks include intimidation and arbitrary detention even at the height of security under the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists. Below are the statements of Ms. Aisha Magapisa and Ms. Therence Lamba on the factors affecting journalist safety.

*“Maybe subjected to assault and harassment.” “Kidnapping and hostage online abuse or even torture, intimidation or arbitrary arrest.”*

*“Influence or how influential the subject of the news item or the subject of the news that (that) journalist is writing or broadcasting about.”*



Furthermore, the second probing question under research question two discoursed the impacts of the factors on journalist safety; Aisha stated that this factor would have an impact when the journalist steps down. An Afghan Journalists Safety Committee revealed that numerous female journalists from several provinces had quit their profession due to security issues parallel to threats and harassment (*Afghanistan: Women quitting journalism due to Security Fears / IFJ*). Conversely, Russell specified its effect on journalists when it loses its reliability. Therence believed that the factors affect journalist safety when the one practicing is attacked. Below are the statements of Mr. Russell Amoroso and Ms. Therence Lamban on how the factors impact journalist safety.

*“In that way it also kanang murag mabutang sa panganib ang journalist kay because gina-question na sila sa mga tao, if ever they write news, if (if) they report something. Ang credibility nila kay maapektohan na, like naa na’y mga doubts ang mga tao if ever ang (ang) (ang) panan-aw nila ba kay na-shape na into fake news na ang ilang belief kay tanan na lang fake news, tanan na lang scam. So maapektohan ang mga journalist.”* (In that way, it also puts journalists in danger because the people are in distrust toward them if ever, they write news, if they report something [news]. Journalist credibility is declining, and public distrust is increasing because they see journalism as fake news. Hence, affects journalists in the long run)

*“When a journalist write umm something na kanang maka hurt sa reputation ng specific na politician kanang the (the) supporters ang mu attack sa imuha.”* (When a journalist writes... something that has the reputation of a specific politician. The supporters itself will surely be attacking you)

*“Oh, another factor is the politics pod diay like the maguindanao massacre diba ano man pod tu siya political kay rivalry man pod tu siya.”* (Oh, another factor is the politics as well, like the Maguindanao massacre. And, Umm, it was then a political rivalry, actually)

Moreover, on the third identifying and probing question under research question two, Communication students were questioned about the factors detrimental to journalist welfare and how they affect journalist safety. Aisha, Russell, Jeffrey, and Therence believed that it is when the journalist gets a sensitive scoop that involves a specific individual. In previous years, the Philippines was considered one of the most dangerous places for journalism. Even though it is democratic, there is an upsurge in the number of cases recorded concerning journalists' violence caused by content associated with political views ("Respect press freedom, protect journalists, and our democracy"). In addition, all four interviewed communication students transpired to a mutual agreement, stating that the factors affecting the journalist's safety may put their life at risk, namely red-tagging and penalization by the law. Below are the statements of Mr. Russell Amoroso and Mr. Jeffrey Mondejar on the factors that are detrimental to the welfare of journalists.

*“Kanang mag-frame ka’g isa ka tao gani, which is also critical as a journalist.” (Framing and angling a person is also critical as a journalist)*

*“Kay makasuhan na ka ug libel mga defamatory statements kay tungod ginadaut nmo ang tao.” (You may get penalized for libel and defamatory statements even with just a word because you have tainted the image of the person)*

*“I think the environment and the situation or the conflict situations.”*

*“The story...and the story that she or he covered.” “When you talk about politics, you would really be red-tagged.”*

Previous research questions explicated the general understanding and discussed the awareness of Communication students; research question three aimed to differentiate the varying perception of the participants concerning their current academic standing. Thus, the first identifying question centers on communication students' knowledge about the well-being of journalists. Therence Lamban expressed that journalism practice in the country poses dangers to security because of human factors like journalist attacks and threats. Similarly, the 2022 Global Impunity Index data agreed with the argument and identified the Philippines as the 7th deadliest country to practice journalism, with 14 unresolved murder cases (*Committee to Protect Journalists* 5). Below is the statement of Ms. Therence Lamban on her idea about the well-being of journalists.

*“Well-being siguro physically, so sa physical aspect I can say nga dili pa totally secured especially sa atoang country wherein journalists are attacked jud like physically, emotionally, there are threats...”(With regard to the well-being, maybe it is about their physical health. I can say that we are not totally secured. Especially in the setup of our country wherein journalists are attacked—like physically, emotionally, there are threats).*

The last identifying and probing questions under the third research question aimed to narrow down the differences in the participants' awareness of journalist safety and identify whether Communication students experience more lessons about the issue in their current academic standing. Amoros, 2nd year, believed he was still in the introductory part and expects to learn more in the coming years. Lamban, 4th year, believed she had learned a lot of lessons in her four years of studying communication. It shows how their understanding differs based on their academic level, as supported by the Standpoint Theory. It states that knowledge emerges from socio-economic status, geographical area, sex, and diversity in viewpoint, particularly from the marginalized sector (“Standpoint Theory | Definition, Approaches, and Facts”; Admin). Below are the statements of Mr. Russell Amoroso and

Ms. Terence Lamban's statements on whether journalists' safety is highlighted more in academics.

*“ah sa karon naa pa mi sa mga technical or more like introduction sa (sa) journalism itself. Wala pa mi naga dig deeper sa mga (sa) (mga) journalism safety, practices, ana.” (...we are still learning the technicalities and still in the introductory part of journalism. We are yet to dig deeper in journalism safety, practices, etc.)*

*“OK, so we’re studying this course for four years now. During that four years, yes, there were a lot of lessons that I’ve, like... I’ve learned. And though? Though like... still, I’m in the process of like somehow scared of... what will it be when we are in the field? But I know like that... that the things that I’ve learned all throughout my four year in the academe, like... taught me to like, stand for the truth.” (OK, so we’re studying this course for four years now. During that four years, yes, there were a lot of lessons that I’ve, like... I’ve learned. And though? Though like... still, I’m in the process of like somehow scared of... what will it be when we are in the field? But I know like that... that the things that I’ve learned all throughout my four year in the academe, like... taught me to like, stand for the truth).*

### **Professionals in the Academe**

As for the media practitioners teaching in the university, the first identifying question focused on the Communication students' awareness of journalism in general. Germaine Avancena and Mike Pasco's responses to the first identifying question indicated that communication students need to gain more knowledge of Philippine journalism. Even though they are aware, in Pasco's opinion, more is needed. Avancena added that communication students have low awareness because they do not watch TV, read the daily news, or listen to the radio, which correlates to the theory of Mica Endsley, the Situation Awareness Theory of 1980, wherein it assumes that awareness is when we collect signifiers from our surroundings and combine them to make sense of what is going on, then use that to anticipate what will happen next (Pew and Mavor; Coolfire).

*“Well as observed pod during sa time nga nagatudlo ko and even sa time na naga skwela ko very ano lang, very low ang awareness sa mga communication students on Philippine journalism....Kasi hindi naman kasi nila ini- expose ang mga sarili nila sa current events communication student ka tapos hindi ka masyado nanonood ng balita diba very ironic pag ganon eh so na observe ko ganon mas parang hindi ganon ka expose very low yung ano awareness ng karamihan sa mga communication students pagdating sa journalism kasi kung aware ka sa current events ibig sabihin nanood ka ng TV, nagbabasa ka ng dyaryo, nakikinig ka ng radio and that means exposed ha kung ano baya yung klase ng journalism na meron tayo dito sa Pilipinas even here dito sa Davao City, yun.” (As I observed while teaching and even while still*

studying, communication students' awareness of Philippine journalism was very low...I've noticed that most communication students have a very low awareness of journalism in our country, even in our city, Davao City, because they don't watch news on TV, read news in newspapers, or listen to radio.)

**Figure 10**

*Screenshot of Interview with Mrs. Germaine “Gem” Avanceña-Arenas on Her Perception on the Awareness of Communication Students*



**Figure 11**

*Screenshot of Interview with Mr. Michael “Mike” B. Pasco on His Perception on the Awareness of Communication Students*



*“Uh, they are aware somehow, but based with my observations on in my with my students and my previous classes. Not, not really.”*

For the second identifying question, which discussed how equipped are the Communication students into venturing into this line of service, both participants expressed their opinion on how communication students need to prepare to work in this type of practice. Specifically, Mr. Pasco stated that measuring a student's readiness was complicated based on their academic performance alone. Both furthered by saying empirical knowledge is essential to equip communication students on the perils of the journalistic profession. It is also supported by the Empiricism Theory of John Lock, which states that experience is vital in making sense of the world and that knowledge is gained through experiences, not by innate knowledge and concept (*"Rationalism vs. Empiricism"*). Below is the statement of Mr. Michael "Mike" B. Pasco on his perception of how equipped communication students are.

*“In terms of, ano naman, how equipped they are. Dili man, dili man jud ko makasulti that they are that really equipped....But I believe ang pinaka peak sa ilahang understanding in terms of being equipped in the industry is that moment that moment na maka trabaho na sila and kasi naga evolve man jud.”* (In terms of how equipped they are. I can't say that they are that really equipped...I believe the peak of their understanding in terms of being equipped in the industry is that moment, that moment that they get the job and because it evolves.)

The first identifying and probing questions under research question two on the set of questions for the professionals working in the academe assessed how conversant the communication students these days with the drawbacks entails through the journalism profession based on their watch. Mrs. Avanceña thought that Communication students were not aware of the downsides of the practice, as in her university years, no one imparted facts on how challenging journalism is. According to the study published by Asemanyi in 2015 (2), an actual teaching process and education system may give rise to inadequate knowledge. While Sir Mike Pasco contradicted Mrs. Avanceña's statement, saying that the communication students' understanding is moderately average. Below are the statements of Mrs. Germaine "Gem" Avanceña-Arenas and Mr. Mike Pasco on their perception of the Communication students' understanding of the drawbacks entailed through the journalism profession.

*“Hindi, hindi kasi kung alam ko lang.”* (No, I don't know)

*“ngayon ko parin na realize noh andami ko palang natutunan na hindi siya tinuro in school maganda rin yung, yung move ng college ng para na kumuha ng mga experienced na mga ano mga journalists ah media practitioner para ano para magturo kasi kahit papano meron pa rin idea ano nangyayari on the ground.”* (I recently realized that I learned a lot more from my experiences than from school. Furthermore, the academy's decision to hire experienced journalists as instructors for

their students is a sound tactical move. Because these employees have experience, they will be able to share it with the students)

*"I believe no man with our you know, current state of technology. Umm, I will say that the knowledge of the students are, you know, advanced somehow they are already exposed with the different kinds of information."* (I believe with our, you know, current state of technology. ummm, I will say that the knowledge of the students are, you know, advanced somehow they are already exposed to different kinds of information)

*"I believe naman na ang mga estudyante especially, the communication or the the communication students naman in terms of kana bitaw understanding umm again if I would rate it, it's in seven."* (I believe that the students, especially, the communication or the communication students in terms of understanding umm again, I would rate it, it's seven).

For the second identifying question, which set foot in defining the knowledge comparison of the previous and the current status quo of communication students about the factors that affect journalist safety, Mrs. Avanceña stated that the communication students of today are far more knowledgeable with the help of social media that was not likely present in the previous generation. In spite of social platforms, Mr. Pasco argued that student's awareness cannot be measured through academic performance, rather than it is when they are already in the field of practice. In a study conducted by Abun et al. , it was taken up that high education may correlate with self-efficacy, but its influence is not significant to work performance as job-relevant awareness is gained over time. Below are the statements of Mrs. Germaine "Gem" Avanceña- Arenas and Mr. Mike Pasco on her perception on the Communication majors status quo more knowledgeable with the factors affecting journalist safety than before.

*"Most probably kasi ano na tayo may social media."*  
(Most likely, because we have social media)

*"yung internet yung mga balita so I guesse mga ang generation ngayon ay ng Communication students are more aware of nung mga ganung issues."* (Because of the internet, this generation of Communication students is more aware

*"yung basic andun na ug wala na tay wala na tayo problema didto nakasabot na sila, this would be my possible job pero again kung mupalalom pa ta, palawuman pa jud natu as what I've said journalist is beyond that kasi."* (the basics are there so there is no problem in that area, this would be my possible job but then again if we go deeper, if we dig deeper as what I've said journalism is beyond that)

*“kana bitaw comments na murag mahimong siyang I sided tungod kay tao siya aning politico naa siyay ginadawat na kwarta ani nga side that is why muhatag kay kung comment uh kana bitaw pabor sa pikas unya medjo bias ka sa pikas tungod kay naa kay personal reason that why you kno muhatag siya ug risgo sa imong ano uh kinabuhi so kining mga butang this things na dapat mahibal-an na kanang kuan sa mga communication students the moment they land in a journalism job.”* (comments that make it seem that it’s one sided because he is involved in a politician since he is receiving money from politicians’ side, that is why his comment is leaning towards the other side and this gives a major risk to the life of the journalist. That’s the reason why the students must know this before they land in a journalism job).

The media professionals working in the academe agreed that even if the advancement of social media is present, the cognizance of communication students could be better. Moreover, the learners may have subjective preferences influenced by age and the media channels (Asemanyi 2). Many dealings still need to be imparted to the students during their institution period. Exposing communication students to the actual scenes in the media field as early as their junior years may benefit them further.

The last set of identifying and probing questions under the third research question elaborated on how the awareness of journalist threats to communication students differed depending on their year level. Hence, questions about the specific subjects wherein journalist safety were discussed. Also, the differences between lower and higher years about journalist safety were tackled. Mike Pasco elaborated that the subjects in the first two years center on journalists' rights, roles, and responsibilities. He added that the last two years have allowed students to apply their learning from the previous years. This narrative corresponds to Asemanyi (2), who argued that course understanding improves over time as students partake in more theoretical and practical endeavors. Below is the statement of Mr. Michael "Mike" B. Pasco (center) on how communication majors differ in terms of their awareness of journalist safety and the specific subjects that discuss the issue.

*“when talking about the different difference, sa subjects sa lower and higher years. I would say na. Sa safety man jud dili na, wala kayo kasi lower years, though we have this media ethics man, we have media ethics. I think that's in lower. I know in lower years, mga unsa mana, tapos pag abot na sap ag-abot na sa umm third year and fourth year, we have also subject that talks about kana bitaw unsa ni about uh existing legislations in the Philippines uh na para sa atoa na mga media practitioners, so I believe naman na iyahang difference niya na ang difference pag lower years medjo mas light talking about katung mga basic responsibility in connection to a present legislations natu diri sa atoang nasod ug sa higher years na muingon naka ug third year ug fourth year I think ang iyaha na pod gusto ipa-abot sa mga estudyante is how umm how you apply, sa imuhang mga learnings”* (...when talking about the difference, on the subjects of the

lower and higher years. I would say that. In terms of safety, that is not present in the lower years [subject] though we have this media ethics, we have media ethics. I think that's in lower. I know in lower years, I think, then when you reach third and fourth year, we have subjects that talks about uh existing legislations in the Philippine for our media practitioners, so I believe that the difference from the lower years is that for the lower years there is only a light discussion about the basic responsibility in connection to a present legislations here in our country and for the higher years, I think they want to teach them how you apply, how you apply, the learning).

After scrutinizing the answers provided by the participants, the general narrative of both students and media practitioners suggested that two common factors influence journalist safety, namely the natural and human threats—concluding that they are aware of the perils and dangers in the professional practice of journalism. Similar narratives in natural dangers encompass natural disasters, while human threats include but are not limited to red-tagging, abduction, killings, politically motivated attacks, and intimidation. Additionally, in a published qualitative study by Ngilangil, he discovered that media sources are particularly vulnerable to persecution from public officials in the form of harassment, intimidation, and censorship, which corresponds to the interviewees' narratives (33).

Throughout their interviews, the proponents amplified the significance of strategizing the academe to nurture communication students' theoretical understanding. This pre-practical avenue can instill empirical knowledge and immerse them in practical journalistic endeavors that will leverage their preparedness for future careers—particularly on safety and security matters. In addition, a study about the worrying situation with press freedom, leadership, and the culture of impunity in the Philippines was also published by UP Associate Professor Danilo Arao. Arao came to the conclusion that until the threat of impunity is eradicated from the media, journalists should not be complicit in it and should take part in the fight to promote the rights of journalists (24).

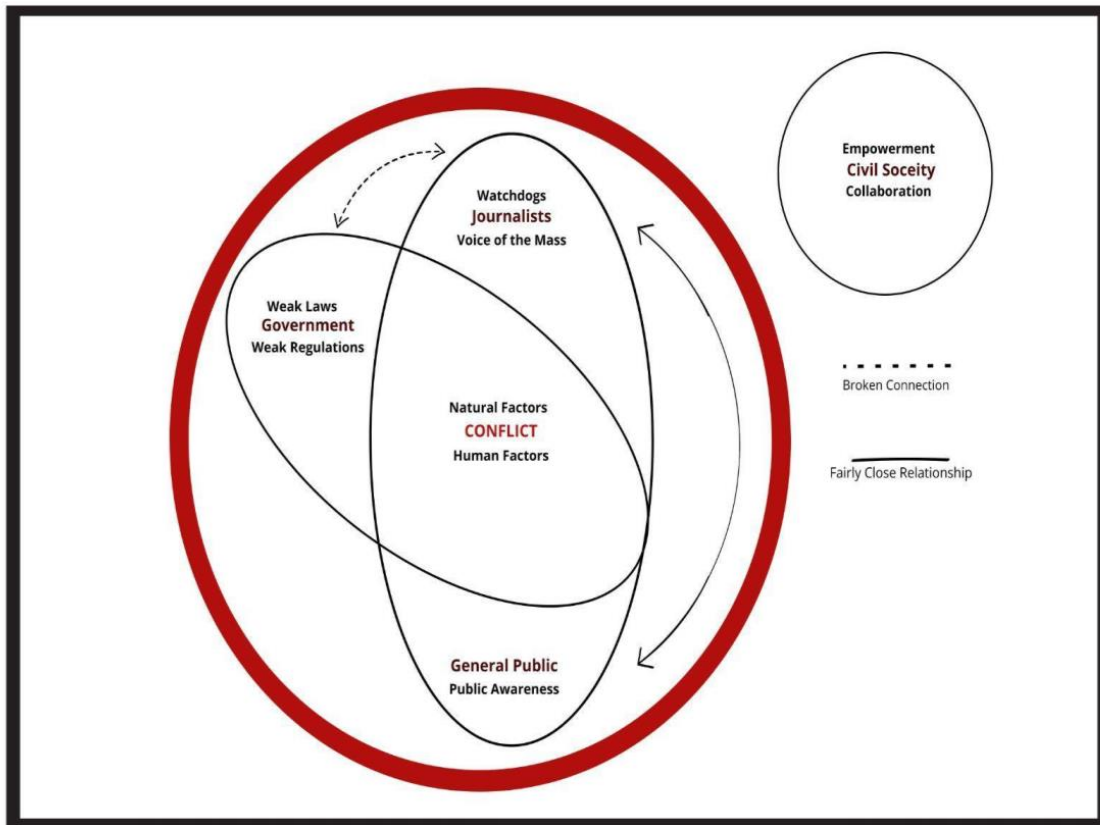
Figure 12 summarizes the participants' responses to research questions on the current state of Philippine journalism in the Philippines. Based on the responses of the participants, the conflict between journalists, the government, and the general public is rooted in human and natural threats. In particular, the duties of journalists as watchdogs and voices of the mass and the role of public awareness in the culture of impunity are threatened by weak laws and regulations from the governing bodies of society. Hence, civil society is vital in empowering multilateral collaborations among these actors to ensure safe, professional journalism practice. These actors are also identified by the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists. Meanwhile, their interconnection is anchored on the CSJ Framework.



**Figure 12**  
*Summary of the Participants' Responses*



**Figure 13**  
*Participants' Narratives in Relation to the CSJ Actors*



## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Implications

Pagmata is a Cebuano word that means awake or the state of being awake. The researchers used this term to encapsulate their curiosity as they entered the media world. As their curiosity grows, so does their interest in the safety of the people working in this field. The same reason pushed the researchers to delve deeper into this scholarly endeavor. The interview questions generated data about the preparedness and knowledge of future media practitioners on the dangers along their career path. In the Philippines, a plethora of factors have an impact on journalists' safety. Media professionals face a variety of risks, including harassment, illegal detention, and kidnapping, to name a few. Despite this, people continue to underestimate the risk journalists take to communicate with the public ("UNESCO: Safety of Journalists").

The significance of this academic investigation is that it raises communication students' awareness of the safety of Filipino journalists. Its objective is to assess their perceptions and

understanding of the factors that affect journalist safety and examine the students' dispositions toward the security of media professionals. The researchers believed that with the current state of journalism in our country, it would be beneficial if we were to improve it and provide a safer and better working environment for the media practitioners of our nation.

### **Recommendations**

Future researchers can initiate creating other documentaries, actively encourage future media practitioners, and cause to acquire knowledge on Filipino journalists' safety—which is significant in the real-life context of performing the job. It is equally essential to highlight a plan to increase safety nets that are beneficial for the journalists' safety and boost social awareness concerning the immediate danger that media professionals are uneasy about. Future researchers can dive deeper into the causes, and most threats a journalist comes across may nearly result in loss of life. Some experts at the UNESCO meeting in May 2018 asserted the plans of assessment concerning the potential for actors involving the monitoring of journalists' safety. Moreover, it was also argued that increasing cooperation around killings and impunity should be prioritized (Berger, 2020). As stated in the primary objective, determining the awareness of the communication students on the safety of Filipino journalists will discourse information that could give all-inclusive approaches to prevent general lawlessness at a later time.

Those who wish to continue the said context of academic investigation shall seek wide-ranging journals, compositions, and published articles to discuss this sensitive topic further. Also, it would be best to further the study parameter to a national scale. University administrators, faculty, and parents can look up to this academic study to influence the course of action, where young individuals partake and share in any social and political discussion. Furthermore, this research can help future media professionals observe work ethics in the media field and be knowledgeable of situations that may or may not occur throughout their careers.

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