



# Examination of Professional Hazards in Journalistic Practice in Nigeria Using Tell Magazine

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## Abstract

Every human engagement, professional is faced with a lot of hazards. These hazards to a large extent inhibit the productivity of the practitioners of any career. While some of these challenges are easily surmountable, it will take courage on the part of practitioners to be able to overcome others. It is a corollary from this that the work examines the nature of hazards that the Nigerian journalist is exposed to and proffer solutions on how such challenges can be addressed. Anchored on the authoritarian and social learning theories, the work adopted the survey research method. Findings revealed that the Nigerian journalist is indeed exposed to a number of hazards that have impeded on his or her daily reportorial activity, which include threat, molestation, verbal warning and poor welfare package amongst others. The work recommends that in improving the level of journalism practice in Nigeria i.e. in broadcast and print media, government should put structure in place to handle the hazards facing journalism practice in the country. Also media owners should increase the pay package of journalists employed in their organizations as this will go a long way to boost the morale of the journalists.

**Keywords:** Hazards; Journalism; Practitioners; Threat; welfare.

## 1. Introduction

Isamoko (2011), says the press is a molder of the society. Although the facts have been lashed with numerous criticisms, we cannot deny the fact that the press shapes the society. Most journalists are aware of this fact; hence they are determined even to the extent of sacrificing their lives, to give the society what it desires.

The reporter who is scampering to meet a politician who has just alighted from an airplane; the reporter who is on a wired boat sailing into a remote mangrove to find out the extent of damage flood has wrecked in an area is trying to keep the society abreast on what is happening around them (Ewuola, 2002).

The function of news gathering and news dissemination has not been a rosy one for the journalists, from the inception of journalism and newspaper publication in Nigeria.

There has been cat and mouse relationship between the press, society, organization, politician and the governments of all ages, whether military or civilian, except when the press allows itself to be cajoled, used and manipulated by the governments or personal interest of the so called 'big power' to suit its whims and caprices.

According to McQuail (1999), Journalism could be defined as Newsgathering, fact finding and reporting of things the way it appears at the moment of reporting, not a definitive study of a situation. This also includes news reporting and commentaries delivered by Radio and Television.

The Longman Dictionary 1984 (7<sup>th</sup> edition), sees Journalism as the collection and editing of materials of current interest for presentation through the new media. In a nutshell, it is the act of looking for news event and editing the unwanted part before it is served to the public who are the final consumers.

The journalists are those that practice journalism in Nigeria and other countries, the journalists are always in problem each time they disseminate the news story that are against important personality, most especially the politicians.

To this end this research is to X-ray some of the hazards of journalism and find some remedies or way out especially as new freedom of information law has now become law in Nigeria.

## 2. History of Tell Magazine

The Company Like most Corporate Organizations, TELL Communications Limited, which today is one of Nigeria's leading publishing companies, had a humble beginning. Though the company was incorporated in 1989, its first edition, TELL weekly magazine, arrived the newsstands on April 8, 1991. The coming of TELL into the Nigerian news business market marked a new dawn in journalism practice in the country. Since then, the company has not looked back.

TELL magazine changed the face of investigative journalism in Nigeria. Its founding editors at inception set some cardinal principles for themselves, key amongst which was that they will tell their stories exactly as it is, and ensure balanced reporting by giving opportunity to all those involved to also state their side of any story. More importantly they pledged to uphold the rights of the citizen and uphold the rule of law by crusading for equity, justice and fairness. These are no mean assignments. No sooner had all these lofty ideals been set, than the magazine and its editors found themselves in the trenches, fighting the military dictatorship of General Ibrahim Babangida

until a coalition of groups forced him to step aside on 27 August, 1993. The “war” against the military continued under another despot General Sani Abacha, who took over the reigns of government from the unelected Interim National Government, ING, of Chief Ernest Shonekan. Those were indeed dark days in the life of the company.

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It is on this pedestal that TELL Communications Limited built a reputation for itself (as it's now dubbed the people's parliament) and its products. TELL has become Nigeria's largest, independent weekly newsmagazine. It is this same doggedness, integrity, and the upholding of the ethics of the profession and good business practices (good corporate governance policy) that established the TELL brand. The magazine fought on the side of the people and the people were quite appreciative of its efforts and the price that the editors and the management of the company had to pay. This was highly rewarded by a grateful citizenry with the magazine recording unprecedented volumes in sales. What later came to be known as guerilla journalism or underground publishing?

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### **2.1. Statement of the Problem**

Naturally, Journalism supposed to be a perfect profession. This is because, journalists are being trained properly with polished languages, balanced and fair reporting with sophisticated technology to meet with the functional society.

However, in attaining this height, there are cases of incessant arrest of journalist by security agents and cases of loss of jobs with the existence of obnoxious laws in conflict with ethics of journalism.

Hence, there has been cat and mouse relationship between the press, society, and government. The press should wake up to their responsibilities and must not be allowed to be cajoled or used for personal interest.

To this end, the study shall examine some of the professional hazards associated with modern day journalism and away to finding out how these could be curbed. Using the medium of Freedom Information Bill (F.I.B) and giving the journalists free hand to carry out their journalistic profession without any restriction by the government.

### **2.2. Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the media hazards of journalism profession.
2. To ascertain if journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting.
3. To find out the media hazards facing journalists in Tell magazine
4. To determine if media hazards have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine.
5. To study the means by which journalists in Tell magazines prevent media hazards.

### **2.3. Research Questions**

1. Is there any profession hazard in journalism?
2. How do journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting?
3. What nature of media hazards facing journalists in Tell magazine?
4. Do media hazards have effect on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine?
5. How does Tell magazine prevent the media hazards in journalism?

### **2.4. Theoretical Framework**

The study examine following theories relevance to this work

### **2.5. Authoritarian Theory**

This theory stemmed from Authoritarian philosophy of Plato (407-327 B.C), who thought that the state was safe only in the hands of few wise men. As posited by [Ikechukwu \(2004\)](#).

This theory assumes that all forms of communication are under the control of the governing elite or authorities or influential bureaucrats.

Authoritarians are necessary to control the media to protect and prevent the people from the national threats through any form of communication (information or news). The press is an instrument to enhance the ruler's power in the country rather than any threats the authorities have all rights to permit any media and control it by providing license to the media and make certain censorship. If any media violate the government policies against license, then

the authority has any right to cancel the license and revoke it. The governments have all right to restrict any sensitive issues from press to maintain peace and security in the nation.

Media theory: explains a situation in which the press and its operations are under the control of the state media materials, under the theory are subjected to advance censorship and guidelines and whoever fails to comply is punished by the state. In the essence of this term suggest that the ruler is an authoritarian one and therefore does not want any form of criticism or unfavorable publicity hence the media are under direct control of the state which make restive legislation, taxation and other economic sector. This theories try to explain the types of government under which journalists in private media are likely to be dealt with by the state, because often, it is the private rather than media owns by the state that report negative things about the government of the day.

## **2.6. Social Learning Theory**

This theory was formulated by Albert Bandura at Standford University, this specifies that Mass – Media messages give audience members an opportunity to identify with attractive characters that demonstrates behaviour.

It explains the aggression and its relevance omitted on the journalists by military. The theory says that we learn to aggressive by observing aggression in others and that there is estimative human programming for fish fighting e.g pipe – bombing etc. the theory says individuals who group – up in aggressive cultures will themselves be non-aggressive similarly, those who grew up in a culture with aggressive behavioral responses. Military by training, is an haven of aggressive training an re-training which has accounted for why the resist violently media report not considered favourable to them and leave journalist involved.

## **2.7. Review of Literature**

For proper understanding of this study some related literature of professional hazards of journalistic are reviewed.

## **3. Journalism and Journalist**

Ewuola (2002), defines “journalism as day - to - day operation of gathering and transmitting news, the above definition shows that, journalism is primarily concerned with giving out of information to an audience on a regular basis. Prof. Akinfeleye (1990), stated that, it is interesting to note as Africans continues to grow economically, politically and socially etc. the need for well trained journalists had become a top priority. Therefore, the tendency towards a very low and sometime negative attitude towards journalism and journalist in African has diminished particular in such countries as NIGERIA, GHANA, KENYA, SENEGAL, TANZANIA, and many others. To this extent journalist in most black Africa countries particularly Nigeria are now looked at this as a bunch of trained intellectual whose roles as communications, interprets, purveyors of goods and news indispensable in a rapidly growing economy such as that of Nigeria.

The above statement made us to know more about journalism and mostly journalist in some developed countries, in Africa and most especially, a country like Nigeria.

Ewuola (2002); stated that, a career opportunity for journalists does not only base on one field, he explained further by saying not only journalist but any person wishes to enter the journalist trade in Nigeria should have an idea of the opportunities and prospects available in Nigeria. Although people without journalism background such as English graduates and others could still be found in many Nigerian media houses.

### **3.1. Career Opportunities for Journalists**

The various job markets that can offer employment and career opportunities include:

The Press: The newspaper, the magazine and book publishing house. While the others are: radio stations, television stations, film industry, government information officer and public relations officer.

A prospective journalist searching for information should strive to be trained formally in a tertiary institution before picking up a job in the media industry.

This will give him a better preparation to meet with the task ahead and it will also indicate to his likely employers that he is not ignorance.

### **3.2. Journalism: A Craft or a Profession**

According to American press Institute, journalism is the product of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information. News is the major element of journalism.

The purpose of journalism practice / profession is to keep the public informed about what takes place around the world. Journalists have the responsibility to report news about what is going on in politics, sports, entertainment industry and education to the public.

While the term craft is define as an activity that involves making something in a skillful way by using your hands.

Journalism as a craft would focus only on the writing aspect because craft is a skillful way of doing something with your hands. Craft can also be seen as an art. In other words, journalism cannot be classified as a craft because it is broader in a way that it is not only about writing articles. There are several categories to be considered when looking at the journalism’ these are the research aspect, the writing skills, interviews skills, editing skills and the ability to identify newsworthy information and distribute it according to the media standards.

According to the oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary The term profession is described as a type of job that requires special training or skill, especially one that needs a high level of education.

## 4. Media Hazards and the Nigeria Press

A media hazard refers to the various dangers reporters of Tell magazine are exposed to during the course of their duties.

It is the exposure to the risk of being injured, destroyed, or killed faced by journalists in their effort to bring information to the public.

These hazards include the following:

- ❖ Government hostility
- ❖ Sinister attack
- ❖ Problem of statement denial
- ❖ Difficulties in separating truth from false hood.
- ❖ Unfriendly and hostile people
- ❖ Problem of publishers interest
- ❖ Language barrier
- ❖ Prone to road accident
- ❖ Lack of rest

### 4.1. Press Freedom

The issue of press freedom is central to the subject matter of the law of mass communication or journalism. The Webster’s Dictionary define freedom of the Press as; “The right to print and publish without government censorship”.

The Final Report Commission on the Press defined freedom of the press as, the degree of freedom from restraint which is essential to enable proprietors and journalists to advance the public interest by publishing the facts and opinions without which democratic electorate cannot make any responsible judgment.

### 4.2. Hazards in Journalism

According to Wikipedia a Hazards is any agent that can cause harm or damage to life, health, property or the environment. While Hazards in journalism sphere therefore, refers to the various dangers, challenges facing the journalists, reporters, newscasters, cameramen, and others who are working in the media organization are exposed to during the course of their duties. Similarly, press or media practitioners are exposed to injury, killing, kidnapping, rape assault, beating, threatened, destruction of their properties.

### 4.3. Ethical Issues in Journalism

Journalists exist mainly to transfer information sourced from the public back to the same public. In doing so a lot of ethical issues are involved. If proper care is not taken, these ethical issues are capable of damaging the hard earned reputation of the journalist. Some of the ethical issues are as follows:-

- ❖ Accuracy and standards for factual reporting:- Reporters are expected to be as accurate as possible given time allotted to story preparation and the space available, and to seek reliable source.
- ❖ Events with a single eyewitness are reported with attributed:- Events with two or more independent eyewitness may be reported as fact. Controversial facts are reported with attribution.
- ❖ Corrections are published when errors are discovered.
- ❖ Independent fact –checking by another employee of the publisher is desirable.
- ❖ Defendants at trail are treated only as having “allegedly” committed crimes, until conviction.
- ❖ Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- ❖ Show good taste:- Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- ❖ Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filling of charges.

### 4.4. Research Design

Scientific observation of the phenomenon needs to be given a sound empirical analysis through a systematic procedure in order to unravel the mystery behind the phenomenon.

Basically, the researcher use survey method and quantitative method. Survey approach affords the researcher the questions to gather data from the respondents who are regarded as relatively large.

## 5. Data and Analysis of Data

Table-1. Do you read Tell magazine?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	157	87.2%
No	23	12.8%
TOTAL	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 157 respondents representing 87.2% read Tell magazine while 23 respondents representing 12.8% said they do not read magazine.

**Table-2.** Which section of Tell magazine do you enjoy reading most?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
SPORTS	89	49.4%
POLITICS	34	18.8%
EDITORIALS	5	2.7%
CRIME	17	9.4%
EDUCATION	35	19.4%
TOTAL	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 89 respondents representing 49.4% read sports, 34 respondents representing 18.8% read about politics, 5 respondents representing 2.7% read editorials, 17 respondents representing 9.4% read about crime while 35 representing 19.4% read about education.

**Table-3.** Are you a journalist?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	50%
No	90	50%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 90 respondents representing 45% agreed they are journalists, while 90 respondents representing 50% said they are not journalists.

**Table-4.** Do you love journalism as a profession?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	50%
No	90	50%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 90 respondents representing 50% said they love journalism as a profession, 90 respondents representing 50% said they do not love journalism as a profession.

**Table-5.** If yes, to what extent?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Larger extent	45	25%
Some extent	45	25%
Undecided	90	50%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 45 respondents representing 25% said they love journalism to a larger extent while 45 respondents representing 25% said they love journalism to some extent while 90 respondents representing 50% said they are undecided.

**Table-6.** If no, why?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Hazard of the job	75	62.5%
Poor salary	27	15%
Stress	58	32.2%
Because of your home	20	11.1%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 75 respondents representing 62.5% said they do not love journalism because the job are full of hazards, 27 respondents representing 15% said they do not love journalism because of poor salary, 58 respondents representing 32.2% said they do not love journalism because of stress while 20 respondents representing 11.1% said because of their home.

**Table-7.** Do journalism profession have any media hazard?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	111	61.7%
No	69	38.3%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 111 respondents representing 61.7% said journalism profession have media hazards, 69 respondents representing 38.3% said journalism profession do not have media hazards.

**Table-8.** How do journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Through Traveling	89	49.4%
Through Kidnapping	13	7.2%
Through killing	40	22.2%
Through threatening	51	28.3%
Through others	7	3.9%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 89 respondents representing 49.4% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through traveling, 13 respondents representing 7.2% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through kidnapping, 40 respondents representing 22.2% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through killing, 51 respondents representing 28.3% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through threatening, 7 respondents representing 3.9% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through other means.

**Table-9.** Is there any professional hazards facing journalism in Tell magazine?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Government hostility	70	39%
Sinister attack	13	7.2%
Unfriendly and hostile people	23	12.8%
Prone to accident	91	50.5%
Others	1	0.5%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 70 respondents representing 39% said journalists in Tell magazine face media hazards through government hostility, 13 respondents representing 7.2% said journalists in Tell magazine face media hazards through sinister attacks, 23 respondents representing 12.8% said journalists in Tell magazine face media unfriendly and hostile people, 91 respondents representing 50.5% said journalists in Tell magazine media hazards through accidents, 1 respondents representing 0.5% said journalists in Tell magazine face media hazards through other means.

**Table-10.** What are these hazards on the performance of journalism on Tell magazines?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	135	75%
No	45	25%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 135 respondents representing 75% said media hazards have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine, 45 respondents representing 25% said media hazards do not have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine.

**Table-11.** If yes, to what extent?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Larger extent	81	45%
Some extent	75	41.7%
Undecided	24	13.3%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 81 respondents representing 45% said media hazards have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine to a larger extent, 75 respondents representing 41.7% said media hazards have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine to some extent while 24 respondents representing 13.3% said they are undecided if media hazards have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine.

**Table-12.** How do tell magazine prevent the media hazards of journalism?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
By being security conscious	58	32.2%
By adequate staff training	30	16.7%
By being smart	83	46.1%
Other methods	9	5%
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 58 respondents representing 32.2% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by being security conscious, 30 respondents representing 16.7% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by doing adequate staff training, 83 respondents representing 46.1% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by being smart while 9 respondents representing 5% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by other methods.

**Table-13.** How would you assess the performance of journalists in Tell magazine?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	96	53.3%
Good	54	30%
Very bad	12	6.7%
Bad	18	10%
No idea	-	-
Total	180	100%

Source: Field Survey 2019

From the table above, 96 respondents representing 53.3% said that the performance of journalists in Tell magazine is very good, 54 respondents representing 30% said the performance of journalists in Tell magazine is good, 12 respondents representing 6.7% said the performance of journalists in Tell magazine is very bad, while 18 respondents representing 10% respondents said the performance of journalists in Tell magazine is bad.

Research Question One: Does journalism profession have any media hazard?

From the [table 7](#), 111 respondents representing 61.7% said journalism profession have media hazards, 69 respondents representing 38.3% said journalism profession do not have media hazards.

Research Question two: How do journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting?

From the [table 8](#), 89 respondents representing 49.4% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through traveling, 13 respondents representing 7.2% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through kidnapping, 40 respondents representing 22.2% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through killing, 51 respondents representing 28.3% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through threatening, 7 respondents representing 3.9% said journalists in Tell magazine encounter media hazards in news gathering and reporting through other means.

Research Question three: What are the media hazards facing journalists in Tell magazine?

From the [table 9](#), 70 respondents representing 39% said journalists in Tell magazine face media hazards through government hostility, 13 respondents representing 7.2% said journalists in Tell magazine face media hazards through sinister attacks, 23 respondents representing 12.8% said journalists in Tell magazine face media unfriendly and hostile people, 91 respondents representing 50.5% said journalists in Tell magazine media hazards through accidents, 1 respondents representing 0.5% said journalists in Tell magazine face media hazards through other means.

Research Question four: Do media hazards have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine?

From the [table 10](#), 135 respondents representing 75% said media hazards have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine, 45 respondents representing 25% said media hazards do not have effects on the performance of journalists in Tell magazine

Research Question five: How does Tell magazine prevent the media hazards of journalism?

From the [table 12](#) above, 58 respondents representing 32.2% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by being security conscious, 30 respondents representing 16.7% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by doing adequate staff training, 83 respondents representing 46.1% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by being smart while 9 respondents representing 5% said Tell magazine journalists prevent media hazards of journalism by other methods.

## 6. Conclusion

The issue of journalist facing hazard in Nigeria is a source of concern despite the return of the country to democracy. The hazards in journalism cannot also be over emphasized in that a journalists carving for a carrier in the field of journalism should prepared for the task head and hazard in the profession.

## Recommendations

In improving the level of journalism in Nigeria i.e. both broadcast and print journalism, it is recommended that government should put structure in place to handle the hazards facing journalism practice in the country.

Government should increase the pay package of journalists working in government media.

Private media owners should also increase the welfare package of their employees as this will go a long way in boosting their morale.

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