

## Online Harassment of Female Journalist in Lagos State

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### **Abstract:**

*This study examines online harassment of female journalist in Lagos State. The objectives of the study is to examine the various types of online harassment faced by female journalist, to explore the coping strategies and support system used by female journalist against online harassment and the strategies and policies put in place to curb online harassment. The study used the Feminist theory to interrogate social problems, trends that have been overlooked such as gender discrimination and structural inequalities. The study employed survey method and online questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The population of the study consists of 250 female journalists. the study discovered that the digital space was popular among female journalist to carry out their job functions, the study further revealed that online harassment is popular in the digital space as most women are harassed while trying to carry out their job functions, that female journalist face challenges such as sexual advances, gender insensitive policies, cultural and religious limitations. The study concludes that women journalists suffer a variety of digital and physical challenges to their freedom of speech. Murder and assault continue to haunt journalists throughout the world, as has internet harassment in the form of rape and death threats, as well as various forms of intimidation, heightened surveillance, impersonation, and other digital dangers. The internet environment has been weaponised, with sophisticated attacks using speed and dispersed networks to promote misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia, religion and other hate speech.*

### **Keywords:**

*Female journalists, Feminism theory, Lagos State, Online harassment and Social media*

## **I. Introduction**

Journalism has emerged as a gripping realm in media, and the journalists act as an intermediary between the people and the media. The female journalists present a paradox where their presence in news gathering and dissemination is now common place, yet they continue to be different from their male counterparts. As establishing and maintaining a social media profile has become a professional obligation in the news business, journalists are vulnerable to online abuse. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in 2019 observed that 90 per cent of American journalists described online harassment is the most serious threat to journalists today, with women and minority journalists being targeted disproportionately (Valerie, 2019). Women journalists suffer a disproportionate danger of assault and intimidation as a result of their job, both online and offline. They are impacted as members of a profession that is increasingly becoming a target in wars, in the context of terrorism, and as a part of the worldwide wave of populism. They are reviled and assaulted because of the messages they spread and the questions

they pose. They are even targeted in certain circumstances for daring to speak at all. In addition to the hazards and threats that their male counterparts face, they face gender-based harassment and assault in the field and in the newsroom. These assaults can be physical or virtual, and they are typically sexualized (Abba et al., 2021).

Men have always controlled the news sector; males prevail in important field assignments, from behind the editor's desk to the front page, and males have disproportionately filled positions of most influence and highest prominence (Aondover & Pate, 2021). This extends to news material, where male sources and voices predominate (Ahmed & Msughter, 2022). Women face lower incomes, fewer senior jobs, and less secure working conditions as a result of this gender imbalance. As a result of these convergent hazards, women journalists and media workers are both less visible and more vulnerable - a two-edged sword that delegitimizes their jobs while also raising their obligations and straining their resilience. Bresslauer (2022) observed that historically, journalism was seen as male profession because of the tasking nature of the profession. This is seen in journalists' greeting as gentlemen of the press. For many years, it was a man's job. The rigours of news collection and processing, working strange hours, and the dangers of the media industry exacerbated issues.

Women were regarded inferior to males in traditional African religion and were not supposed to speak in public. Women were seen as mere assistance and, as such, could not function on an equal footing with males. With a patriarchal system of functioning in place, beliefs about a woman's purpose, expectations, and competence are deeply ingrained, clearly defining what they expect of themselves and what society expects of them. It has become a worldwide goal for women to have equal access to and influence over all critical areas of human effort, including the media (Aondover et al., 2022). However, the issue of gender imbalance persists in Nigeria. Female journalists are subjected to the glass ceiling issue. Most male editors believe that women have little intellectual aptitude, therefore they allocate them to "less important" beats like gender violence, health, beauty, and cooking suggestions. They are considered as idiots incapable of uncovering the news behind the news.

Journalists and other members of the media suffer a variety of digital and physical challenges to their freedom of speech. Murder and assault continue to haunt journalists throughout the world, as has internet harassment in the form of rape and death threats, as well as various forms of intimidation, heightened surveillance, impersonation, and other digital dangers. The internet environment has been weaponised, with sophisticated attacks using speed and dispersed networks to promote misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia, religion and other hate speech. False accounts and tweets spread disinformation (Aondover et al., 2023). The beginning of 2020 also brought the COVID-19 epidemic, which drastically altered people's lives, particularly their communication methods. People largely talked and socialised online due to the requirement for social separation in the real environment to avoid the transmission of the illness. This has resulted in a significant surge in online abuse and violence. The epidemic has resulted in a rise in violence against women, who have been imprisoned in their houses alongside the abusers owing to the restrictive restrictions, which has also spilled over into the internet sphere (Aondover et al., 2022).

The rise of online harassment is a concerning problem resulting from the innovations in technology in the last few decades (Hile et al., 2023). Online harassment attacks people and groups through a variety of unfriendly and abusive behaviours, which can lead to many negative psychological and social consequences for targets (Idris & Msughter, 2022). Online hate is a

different sort of online harassment in which the assault is based on the target's minority status or other group traits, such as religious conviction, sexual orientation, or race. Online hate is a severe type of harassment because it assaults the target's identity. Even when it targets individuals, online hate attacks and devalues the entire collective (Kurfi et al., 2021). Online abuse may be terrifying, and one possible outcome is that people stop expressing their thoughts and participating in public conversations. One goal of online harassment and hate is to instill fear in the groups targeted and to remind those who are considered "different" or "other" that they do not belong. Studies have shown that, in addition to instilling fear and other emotional symptoms, experiences with online harassment can lead individuals to become more cautious in expressing their views (Fladmoe & Nadim, 2019). Female journalists across the world face professional and public discrimination and harassment. Personal assaults via online comments, threatening emails, and social media postings, in addition to existing hurdles, pose a severe danger to female journalists' involvement. Even in places where journalists are largely protected, online sexism is becoming the standard for many female journalists (Maikaba & Msughter, 2019).

Although the development of new communication technologies and the expansion of the online space have enabled many people's voices to be heard, including those who did not have such an opportunity in the offline world, they have also imposed new challenges and serious risks for everyone, particularly those whose profession is closely related to the public, such as journalists (Mojaye & Msughter, 2022). The goal of internet harassment and attacks is to stifle the victims' voices. However, because of the freedom offered by the digital realm and the (apparently) limitless communication capabilities, online harassment affects not just the individual targeted, but everyone else who reads it. Furthermore, the group of individuals who share certain shared identification features, ideas, and attitudes with the principal victim of the online assault will be victims of the message primarily directed to that specific individual. The harasser succeeds to influence the behaviour of the public audience that identifies with the victim via their goal to reprimand the victim. As a result, the underlying purpose of online harassment and attacks on journalists is to silence not only all female journalists, but all journalists in general. The study however will focus on online harassment among female journalist in Lagos state.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Women confront varied degrees of gender discrimination in practically every aspect of society, including the media industry. Initially, women's job advancement was hampered by conventional social ideas of women as just objects of sexual pleasure, as well as a lack of possibilities for women in most institutions and organisations to either work or gain education like their male counterparts (Agbaje, 2020). The widespread perception is that the world we live in exposes female journalists to more insults than male colleagues just because they are female (Tuneva, 2022). Gender stereotypes are evident in the substance of comments and messages sent at female journalists, which are frequently on their physical appearance rather than their work. As a result, women journalists are frequently subjected to insults and denigration, undermining their personal and professional standing. The gender-based violence pandemic, which was one of the side effects of the Covid-19 epidemic, spilled over online, and in 2020, there was an increasing trend for online violence and verbal abuse, despite a drop in the frequency of actual attacks on journalists.

Online harassment is a huge societal issue that affects many societies. Some community members, such as female journalists and activists, endure much greater consequences since their work necessitates quick accessibility and transparency about their identities. These attacks on female journalists while they are doing their jobs are exacerbated by sexist and misogynistic prejudice. As a result, the threats that journalists get are frequently delivered via social media

networks (Bejkova, 2022). Online harassment is a serious problem with real-world offline consequences. Nonetheless, online harassment is a famously pervasive problem that is continually developing and altering globally and across platforms. As the Internet and online communities continue to expand in popularity, there is a growing interest in understanding how online abuse begins and spreads. As a result, we discovered that it can have a negative influence on an individual's mental health, physical safety, gender equality in journalism, and free press.

As establishing and maintaining a social media profile has become a professional obligation in the news business, journalists are vulnerable to online abuse. International Centre for Journalists (ICJ, 2020) conducted a global survey on online violence against women journalists and discovered that 73 per cent of women had experienced online harassment; 2 per cent and 18 per cent had received threats of physical/sexual violence; 20 per cent had been attacked or abused offline; and 26 per cent had reported negative effects on mental health. Furthermore, 38 per cent reduced their online visibility, 30 per cent self-censored on social media, 20 per cent avoided all online connection, and 18 per cent intentionally avoided audience involvement.

Misogyny and gas lighting connect with racism, religious intolerance, homophobia, and other kinds of prejudice to severely and disproportionately endanger women journalists. Threats of sexual assault and death are common, and they are occasionally directed at their families. This trend is also linked to the emergence of viral misinformation, digital conspiratorial networks, and political polarization. The psychological, physical, professional, and digital safety and security consequences of this rising freedom of speech and gender equality problem overlap, converge, and are frequently interdependent (Onyejelem, 2018). Harassment online can be the starting point for more severe and destructive harassment in real life. In light of this, it is critical to perform a comprehensive assessment of the types of online harassment experienced by journalists. This study will x-ray how female journalist copes with online harassment in Lagos state.

## 1.2 Research Questions

- a. What are to various types of online harassment faced by female journalist in Lagos State?
- b. What are the coping mechanism and support system used by female journalist against online harassment?
- c. What are the strategies and policies that can be put in place against online harassment in Lagos state?

## II. Review of Literature

Koirala (2020) examined the experiences of female journalists in Nepal in the context of rapidly growing expansion of broadband Internet. By examining the findings of the qualitative in-depth interview of 48 female journalists, it argues that online platforms are threatening press freedom in Nepal, mainly by silencing female journalists. The study also indicates that the problem is particularly severe in such a patriarchal society as a significant number of incidents of abuse go unreported, largely due to a culture of shame as well as ineffective legislation. The findings show that some of the female journalists experiencing harassment tolerate it by being 'strong like a man,' while many of them avoid social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to keep free of such abuse. The study also suggests that individual efforts to tackle the vicious issue of misogyny might not be enough and collective effort from legislation, media organisations, and feminists is required to address the issue.

Nadim (2021) examined whether women experience more and different online harassment than men, to what extent different types of online harassment silence its targets, and whether there are gendered patterns in how online harassment works as a silencing mechanism. Analytically the paper distinguished between different levels of severity of online harassment and what the harassment is directed toward. Contrary to popular expectations, we find that more men than women have experienced online harassment. The main reason is that men receive more comments directed at their opinions and attitudes; women and men are equally exposed to harassment directed toward group characteristics. However, targeted women are more likely than targeted men to become more cautious in expressing their opinions publicly. Furthermore, the gender differences increase as the harassment becomes more aggressive and directed toward group characteristics.

Dwifatma (2021) in her study maps the proportion of female and male journalists in ten Indonesian mass media organizations while also exploring the factors that contribute to the condition. This research applies quantitative and qualitative mixed methods, involving journalists in 10 media (n = 811) at both the reporter and managerial levels, and a focused-group discussion (FGD) with 14 female editors. At the reporter level, there are 64 per cent male and 36 per cent female journalists. At the managerial level, the figures change to 77 per cent (men) and 23 per cent (women). The three factors that hinder the career of female journalists are a double burden (career and household), mental barriers, and 'masculine' office politics

Phuong (2021) examined the safety experiences of Nigerian women journalists to identify the categorisation of gender-based discriminations and coping strategies affected women journalists used to manage to work in a male-dominated media industry. The researchers employed a semi-structured interview approach as the research instrument. According to the report, 37 participants (25 women journalists, 10 men journalists, and 2 human resource managers) were interviewed from 12 broadcast media organisations in Northern Nigeria. The findings indicated that Nigerian women journalists experienced different types of gendered unsafely including discrimination in newsgathering and production and sexual harassment; most of the affected women used risky coping strategies such as ignoring the situation and being silent about it. The study also established the fact that most media organisations in Nigeria lacked policies and frameworks to handle such cases.

Posetti (2020) in collaboration with UNESCO and the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) examined the incidence, impacts, and responses to online violence against women journalists in 15 countries including Nigeria. The essence of the study was to identify more effective methods to counter the threat to press freedom, journalists' safety, and women's active participation in Journalism. Among the 12 top findings of the investigation are: That 73 per cent of women respondents said they had experienced online violence; threats of physical (25 per cent) and sexual violence (18 per cent) plagued the women journalists surveyed; 20 per cent of women respondents said they had been attacked or abused offline in connection with online violence they had experienced; 13 per cent increased their physical security in response to online violence and 4 per cent said that they had missed work due to concerns about the attacks jumping offline; the mental health impacts of online violence were the most frequently identified (26 per cent) consequences. 12 per cent of respondents said they had sought medical or psychological help because of online violence.

Chadha (2020) used data from in-depth interviews with 23 women university students, who were harassed/cyberbullied, to explore how young women respond to negative experiences online. Findings suggested women deploy various defensive strategies while navigating online

spaces, from normalizing harassment—and taking it for granted—to self-censorship and withdrawal. Interpreting these responses through a feminist lens clarifies the implications for women’s willingness and ability to participate in public spaces and highlights an increased urgency for social media platforms to address and mitigate harassment.

Olayinka (2020) in her study investigates the challenges faced by women journalists in the Nigerian media scope. The study anchored on the feminist muted group theory (FMGT). The survey research and interview methods were employed to sample 120 women journalists in some Nigerian media outfits. They were purposively selected to respond to the questionnaire and four senior women journalists based on their work experience were interviewed. Four electronic media stations (two television and two radio stations) were considered for the study. Data were analysed through simple percentages and the qualitative data analysed thematically. It was found that women journalists face myriads of challenges, including abuse, sexual harassment and marital issues such as divorce, spending inadequate time with spouse, children and participating less in family functions. In addition, some women are restricted to anchoring less challenging programmes compared to their male counterparts in the industry. Hence, it was recommended that media stations should look beyond sexual stereotyping and assist women journalists to overcome the various challenges by giving them more time to spend with their families and by giving them challenging duties that can boost their self-confidence and help them attain enviable heights in the profession.

## **2.1 Theoretical Foothold**

The theory adopted in this study is the feminist theory. Feminist theory is a major branch within sociology that shifts its assumptions, analytic lens, and topical focus away from the male viewpoint and experience toward that of women. In doing so, feminist theory shines a light on social problems, trends, and issues that are otherwise overlooked or misidentified by the historically dominant male perspective within social theory. The feminist theory can help provide valuable insights into understanding online harassment among female journalist, online harassment is a pressing issue that affects women, the feminist theory offers a lens to analyze the underlying power dynamics, gender based discrimination and structural inequalities that contribute to this phenomenon (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a).

Feminist theory is an approach to understanding and conceptualizing gender roles and advocates for the inclusion of women’s interests in social organization. Analyzing the varied experiences of people from a political perspective that holds a sex-based analysis as one of the key analytical lenses constitutes a feminist approach. Another way of saying this is that within feminist theoretical analyses, many distresses experienced by women—and some of those experienced by men—can best be understood in terms of sex-based and gender-based social and structural restrictions, constrictions, and resource deficits, as these limitations interact with various other structural and interpersonal constraints. Feminist theories, first of all, explain and suggest directions for change in social and environmental factors that create or contribute to dilemmas and problems experienced by women (Onyejelem et al., 2023). Second, they explain and propose interventions for women’s intrapersonal and interpersonal concerns. Third, feminist theories provide a perspective for evaluating social and environmental experiences of groups and individuals, regardless of sex or gender. The emphasis placed on each of these three areas, along with the centrality of additional factors that influence marginalization, oppression, and unwarranted constraints, depends on which feminist theory is used (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b).



Feminism has two waves of development. Feminist activism in the 1800s was concerned primarily with legal and political rights. From the 1960s onward, the emphasis has shifted to unequal opportunities in work, political, and public spheres. This second wave focused on social inequalities. Feminism since the 1960s has developed a number of unique perspectives. The approaches range from liberal to radical to postmodern. All of the perspectives share a deep concern for personal and social growth, as well as a linking of the personal and the political. Some approaches recognize basic gender differences in conceptualizing and acting in the world, contesting a dominant male perspective. Most feminist theories suggest ways to help eliminate misperceptions, sexual inequalities, restrictions, and oppression faced by women-goals that many writers have pointed out are shared by social workers-but the goals of each branch of feminism vary according to the perspective on the forces that impede women (Marganski, 2019).

**Liberal Feminism:** Liberal feminism is a gradualist approach to improving the position of women in society by promoting equal opportunity through legislation while, at the same time, challenging the socialization process that accepts gender inequality. Gradualism that seeks equality and focuses on cultural assumptions and social relations; adherents address legislation, social conventions, and socialization. Rather than train women to dismantle structural supports of power imbalances, liberal feminists are more likely to examine interpersonal interactions and encourage women to behave more like those men who are successful in their careers. That is, liberal feminists work within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into that structure, often using a model of individual rather than structural deficit (Ezeonyejiaku & Onyejelem, 2021).

**Radical Feminism:** Radical feminism is an approach that focuses on men's power and privilege within the social system and seeks to promote women's organizations as separate social organizations. Separatism that focuses on patriarchy; adherents promote separate women's structures in organization and social life. Radical feminists argue that individual women's experiences of injustice and the miseries that women think of as personal problems are actually political issues, grounded in power imbalances. Often using the slogan "The personal is political," they argue that separating public from private issues masks the reality of male power, a system of domination that operates similarly in interdependent public and private spheres. Radical feminists hold that public-private divisions isolate and depoliticize women's experience of oppression. This is criticized for focusing on common gender differences and not diversity of experiences (Usman et al., 2022).

The justification for using this theory is that feminism is a complex and evolving movement, advocating for gender equality, it has its roots in the late 19th and 20th centuries with the first wave feminism. Online harassment among female journalist will be studied through the feminist lens, the theory helps to uncover some complexities of issues and also inform strategies to combat online harassment. The theory will shed more light on the gendered nature of harassment; cyber bullying is rooted in gender based discrimination and misogyny, female journalist experience harassment that is explicitly or implicitly gendered, the theory also acknowledges that harassment is not solely a personal issue but is influenced by broader structural inequalities (Governor et al., 2024). This theory enriches the research by contextualizing the experience within a gendered framework.

### III. Research Method

This study employed survey research method with the use of online questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. The population of the study consists of the 250 women in the National Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ), while the sample size of the study constitutes the list of all registered female journalists with NAWOJ Lagos State Chapter. With the population size of 250 and a confidence level of 95 per cent at 1.96 and a margin error of 5 (p=0.5) per cent, the sample size for the study will be 152 respondents. The study adopted simple random sampling to select the respondents. The data was scored, processed and analysed using the IBM SPSS software application version 23.0 Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected from the respondents. The descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means and standard deviation was used to describe the participants in the study.

### IV. Result and Discussion

**Table 1.** The Various Types of Online Harassment Faced by Female Journalists

S / N	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not sure	Total
1.	I use the online platform frequently to carry out my job function	17(11.2%)	127(83.6%)	3(2%)	2(1.3%)	3(2%)	152(100%)
2.	Online harassment is popular in the digital media today	33(21.7%)	116(76.3%)	–	–	3(2%)	152(100%)
3.	I have been harassed on Social media while trying to carry out my job function	13(8.6%)	90(59.2%)	25(16.4%)	6(3.9%)	18(11.8%)	152(100%)
4.	I consider Online harassment to be very severe	32(21.1%)	110(72.4%)	6(3.9%)	–	4(2.6%)	152(100%)
5.	I have experienced cyber bullying on Social Media platforms	17(11.2%)	97(63.8%)	19(12.5%)	6(3.9%)	13(8.6%)	152(100%)
6.	I have been trolled on online platforms while carrying out my job functions	16(10.5%)	90(59.2%)	24(15.8%)	7(4.6%)	15(9.9%)	152(100%)
7.	I have been a victim of hate speech on online media platforms	20(13.2%)	92(60.5%)	26(17.1%)	3(2%)	11(7.2%)	152(100%)

Source: Field survey 2024.

Table 1 examined the various types of online harassment faced by female journalists in their respective place of works, analysis shows that 127 of the respondents at 83.6% agreed that they used online platform frequently to carry out their job functions, 17 of the respondent also strongly agreed with the statement with just 2 respondents disagreeing with the statement, a large number of the respondents also agreed that online harassment is popular in the digital media today, 76.3% of the respondents agreed and 21.7% also strongly agreed with the statement, however 3 of the respondents were not sure. 90 of the respondents at 59% also agreed that they have been harassed on social media while trying to carry out their job functions, 25 of the respondents at 11% however disagreed with the statement.



72% of the respondents agreed that they considered online harassment to be very severe, 32 of the respondents also strongly agreed with the statement with only 6 respondents at 4% disagreeing with the statement, 97 of the respondents at 63.8% agreed that they have experienced cyber bullying on social media platforms, 11.2% also strongly agreed with the statement while 19 people at 12.5% disagreed, 90 respondents at 59.2% agreed that have been trolled on online platforms while carrying out my job functions, 24 respondents at 15.8% however disagreed with the statement. 92 respondents at 60.5 also agreed that they have been victim of hate speech on social media platforms, 26 respondents disagreed with the statement while 11 respondents at 7.2% were not sure.

**Table 2.** Coping Mechanism and Support System against Online Harassment

S/ N	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not sure	Total
1.	I respond to online harassment by simply ignoring	23(15.1%)	110(72.4%)	11(7.2%)	3(2%)	5(3.3%)	152(100%)
2.	I respond to online harassment by blocking and reporting	33(21.7%)	97(63.8%)	15(9.9%)	1(0.7%)	6(3.9%)	152(100%)
3	I alter my online behavior due to the fear of being abused	20(13.2%)	87(57.2%)	27(17.8%)	8(5.3%)	10(6.6%)	152(100%)
4.	I often update my privacy setting on social media platforms	24(15.8%)	100(65.8%)	23(15.1%)	3(2%)	2(1.3%)	152(100%)
5.	Online harassment affects my emotional wellbeing	24(15.8%)	93(61.2%)	19(12.5%)	7(4.6%)	9(5.9%)	152(100%)
6.	I feel supported by my friends and families when dealing with online harassment	29(19.1%)	98(64.5%)	13(8.6%)	—	12(7.9%)	152(100%)
7.	I have sought for professional help and counseling to cope with the emotional stress of online harassment	14(9.2%)	82(53.9%)	35(23%)	7(4.6%)	14(9.2%)	152(100%)
8.	I have participated in educational programs or workshops on coping with online harassment	15(9.9%)	97(63.8%)	27(17.8%)	5(3.3%)	8(5.3%)	152(100%)

Source: Field survey 2024.

Table 2 assessed the coping mechanism and support system against online harassment, 110 respondents at 72.4% agreed that they respond to online harassment by simply ignoring, 5 respondents however were not sure, 15 respondents at 9.9% disagreed that respond to online harassment by blocking and reporting, 97 respondents at 63.8% however agreed to the statement, 87 respondents at 57.2% agreed that they alter my online behavior due to the fear of being abused, 100 respondents at 65.8% agreed that they often update my privacy setting on social media platforms 24% of the respondents also strongly agreed to the statement, 19 of the respondents however disagreed that online harassment affects their emotional wellbeing.

However, 93 respondents at 61.2% agreed to the statement, 98 respondents at 64.5% also agreed that they feel supported by my friends and families when dealing with online harassment, 13 respondents at 9.6% however disagreed with the statement, 35 of the respondents at 23% also disagreed that they have sought for professional help and counseling to cope with the emotional stress of online harassment, 53.9% of the respondents however agreed to the statement and 97 of the respondents at 63.8% also agreed that they have participated in educational programs or workshops on coping with online harassment, 27 of the respondents however disagreed with the statement.

**Table 3.** Strategies and Policies to Curb Online Harassment among Female Journalists

S / N	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not sure	Total
1.	There are legal frameworks that address online harassment	28(18.4%)	98(64.5%)	12(7.9%)	2(1.3%)	12(7.9%)	152(100%)
2.	I have taken legal action against an online harasser	26(17.1%)	64(42.1%)	44(28.9%)	5(3.3%)	13(8.6%)	152(100%)
3.	I'm informed about the policies in place against online harassment	29(19.1%)	85(55.9%)	21(13.8%)	2(1.3%)	15(9.9%)	152(100%)
4.	Contact forms and chat support are effective against online harassment	31(20.4%)	91(59.9%)	11(7.2%)	–	19(12.5%)	152(100%)
5.	Online platforms should communicate more about their efforts to combat online harassment	38(25%)	113(74.3%)	1(0.7%)	–	–	152(100%)

Source: Field survey 2024.

Table 3 evaluated the strategies and policies to curb online harassment among female journalist, 98 respondents at 64.5% agreed that there are legal frameworks that address online harassment, 26 of the respondents at 17.1% strongly agreed that have taken legal action against an online harasser, 21 respondents however at 13.8% disagreed that informed about the policies in place against online harassment, 91 of the respondents at 59.9% agreed that contact forms and chat support are effective against online harassment, 20.4% of the respondent also strongly agreed to the statement, 113 of the respondents at 74.3% agreed that online platforms should communicate more about their efforts to combat online harassment, 38 respondents at 25% also strongly agreed to the statement.

#### 4.1 Discussion of Findings

##### *Examining the various types of online harassment faced by female journalist*

From the analysis above it can be deduced that the digital space was popular among female journalist to carry out their job functions, this is quite evident with the advent of globalization, with the introduction of news outlet on social media spaces like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, journalist will engage on the digital space to carry out their job responsibilities, the study further revealed that online harassment is popular in the digital space today, the study further revealed that online harassment is popular in the digital space most women are harassed while trying to carry out their job functions, this finding is similar with the work of Posetti (2020)

that most women have faced online harassment; however Nadim (2021) is of the opinion that more men than women have experienced online harassment.

*Assessing the coping mechanism and support system against online harassment*

The study further assessed the coping mechanism and support system that female journalist use against online harassment, findings revealed that most of the journalist responded to online harassment by simply ignoring; this is similar to the findings of Koirale (2020) that was of the opinion that online platforms threatens press freedom, a lot of abuse go unreported due to a culture of shame and ineffective legislation, Phuong (2021) also agreed that a coping strategy is ignoring the situation and being silent about it; the study also found out that most of the respondents responds to online harassment by simply ignoring and blocking, the study also revealed that most of the respondents updated their privacy setting on their social media platforms out of the fear of being harassed. this finding is similar with that of Masuilo (2019) that female reporters changed the way they reported to mitigate the problems of online harassment, a handful of the respondents also agreed that online harassment affected their emotional well-being, this finding agreed with that of Magdalena Celuch (2023) that online harassment increases the level of anxiety.

*Evaluating the strategies and policies to curb online harassment among female journalists*

The study lastly evaluated the strategies and policies on curbing online harassment among female journalist, most of the respondents agreed that there are legal frameworks in place that addresses online harassment, this however is in contrast with the findings of Phuong (2021) that was of the opinion that most media platforms lacked policies to handle online harassment, the study further revealed that some of the respondents have taken legal actions against online harassers. The study also revealed that contact forms and chat supports are effective tools that combat online harassment, Leslie Park (2022) was also of the opinion that online platforms should develop tools targeted at curbing online harassment, the study lastly revealed that online platforms should communicate more about their efforts to combat harassment, this is also in line with the finding of Chadha (2020) that Social media platforms should address and mitigate online problems.

## V. Conclusion

Going by the findings, the study discovered that the digital space was popular among female journalist to carry out their job functions, the study further revealed that online harassment is popular in the digital space as most women are harassed while trying to carry out their job functions, that female journalist face challenges such as sexual advances, gender insensitive policies, cultural and religious limitations. The study further revealed that most of the journalists responded to online harassment by simply ignoring; the study also found out that most of the respondents responds to online harassment by simply ignoring and blocking, the study also revealed that most of the respondents updated their privacy setting on their social media platforms out of the fear of being harassed.

The study also found out that most journalists received help from friends and families when dealing with online harassment, further enquiries also revealed that most respondents have sought for professional help and counseling when dealing with online harassment. Lastly, the study revealed that there are legal frameworks in place that addresses online harassment, that some of the respondents have taken legal actions against online harassers. The study also revealed that contact forms and chat supports are effective tools that combat online harassment. The study concludes that women journalists suffer a variety of digital and physical

challenges to their freedom of speech. Murder and assault continue to haunt journalists throughout the world, as has internet harassment in the form of rape and death threats, as well as various forms of intimidation, heightened surveillance, impersonation, and other digital dangers. The internet environment has been weaponised, with sophisticated attacks using speed and dispersed networks to promote misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia, religion and other hate speech.

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