



Introduction: Understanding Roots and Betweenness Defining Safety of Journalists as a Sub-field of Research. Reading between the Lines

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Introduction: Understanding Roots and Betweenness Defining Safety of Journalists as a Sub-field of Research. Reading between the Lines

Introduction

The topic of the safety of journalists has emerged as an increasingly important one in public discourse in tandem with the advancement of the study of journalists' safety over the last few years. As more attention is given to the fact that a journalist is killed every seventh day for work-related reasons, the awareness of the safety of journalists as one of the most daunting challenges for press freedom and democracy around the world has grown. The Nobel peace prize award of 2021 to brave journalists Maria Ressa and Dmitiri Muratov also drew international public opinion's attention to how the safety of journalists can serve as a pointer towards democratic development and media freedom in general.

In the more than ten years since the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists was launched in 2012, the topic of the safety of journalists has emerged significantly in academic and public spheres. In 2014 UNESCO developed a research agenda in line with the Plan of Action and promoted it through a call for research cooperation with academic scholars to inspire new research in an area that previously had received little attention. The increase in publications on journalism safety and the issue of impunity over the last decade is manifest. However, can we talk about the appearance of a new academic field?

Pierre Bourdieu's field theory would see an academic field as a space characterized by a distinct set of rules, values, and norms that shape the actions and decisions of individuals within it (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993). According to such an approach, fields are separated from one another by their own specific forms of economic, cultural, and social capital, and habitus (dispositions, ways of thinking, and acting), which defines the boundaries of each field. Using Bourdieu's approach, the research on the safety of journalists would probably rather be a sub-field: distinct areas of specialization within a larger field that has their own forms of capital and habitus (Di Salvo 2022; Garnham and Williams 1980; Hesmondhalgh 2006; Prior 2013).

A reason for considering "Safety of Journalists" as a field on its own premises, is the fact that the UN, UNESCO, University Centres, and Research Groups have jointly worked to increase the amount and quality of research into safety issues for journalists. One example is the research agenda for safety of journalists developed by UNESCO in cooperation with researchers. We consequently find the topic of safety of journalists to be a remarkably interesting case to investigate to better understand how a sub-field might emerge and develop, and how roots are taken.

Our Question Here would be If the Safety of Journalists is to be Considered an Academic Field – Where does It Find Its Roots?

To answer this question, we will approach the eleven selected articles of this Special Issue and map their origins with the help of computational methods, in an attempt to unlock where their finds their "roots" in terms of methods used, theoretical frameworks and citation networks,

which with the help of centrality metrics enable us to say something about the article's assumed importance in its network and unpack how the networks relate to each other as topical clusters. Building on these exercises, we will continue the discussion about the Safety of Journalists as an academic subfield and discover how knowledge is shared and developed within and among clusters. Who stands out as important mediators of information in this emerging field? And what characterizes the geographies of the various researchers and research topics?

More than “Just” Ten¹ Articles?

The ten articles of this Special Issue were collected from some of the best paper presentations at the 7th Annual International Conference on the Safety of Journalists at OsloMet University, as well as through an additional call for papers. To better understand the selected articles, we first systematized the methods used in each of them. We found that all articles utilized in-depth or semi-structured interviews in some form as their main data collection method. The articles' authors argue that interviews have the ability to provide a thorough understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and motivations.

Some authors employed mixed methods, combining interviews with surveys (two articles) and document analysis (three articles), to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of their research question. According to these authors, this approach allowed them to triangulate data and enhance the validity and reliability of their results. There are clearly many similarities between the investigations represented here although the topics and locations of the studies are quite diverse.

Reading the 11 articles, we realized that the articles speak to each other in terms of theoretical frameworks and how theoretical perspectives are reflected in the methodologies developed for each investigation. “*Resilience*” is the most used theoretical framework. It is employed by authors here to formulate research questions, develop methods, in addition to interpreting and explaining findings. In general, resilience is seen as the capacity to bounce back from adversity and maintain functioning in challenging conditions. In the context of journalism, resilience is being used to refer to the ability of journalists to continue carrying out their work safely in the face of threats, or to “bounce back” after a critical event. Typically, the authors represented here also include other theoretical perspectives to understand the safety issues, for example *resistance*. This perspective focuses on the means by which journalists withstand threats and persevere. *Post-traumatic growth* is another perspective used to examine how journalists can experience positive outcomes after exposure to traumatic events, such as increased self-awareness and personal strength. *Emotional labour*, meanwhile, highlights the emotional toll that journalism can take on journalists, including feelings of stress, anxiety, and burnout. The *postcolonial feminist approach* considers the impact of colonialism and patriarchal structures on the experiences of journalists, particularly those from marginalized communities. *Mediated social capital* encompasses the role that social networks and relationships play in promoting journalist safety. *Discursive structural inequalities* highlight the ways in which dominant narratives and power structures shape the experiences of journalists and impact their safety. *Routine activity theory* examines how individuals' characteristics and routines, contact with motivated offenders, and lack of guardianship dispose them to victimization. *Media capture* considers the ways in which media organizations and industries can be influenced by political and economic interests, which can lead to biased reporting and threats to journalist safety. The *social-ecological perspective* explores the interplay between the social and natural environments in shaping journalist safety. *Boundary work* is used to analyse the evolution of journalism and its institutions over time. As digital technology and cultural and political changes raise questions about the definition and purpose of journalism, boundary work helps to understand the ongoing development of the field.

As guest editors of the special issue, we find all these perspectives and lenses help the authors gain new insights and build knowledge about the safety of journalists. At the same time, we see that these perspectives are interconnected and belong to similar traditions related to each other. This kinship is one of the reasons why we want to know more and understand better where the emergent research field of safety of journalism is coming from.

Building a Citation Network

At the first level of analysis, we reviewed the 11 articles and their references, which in total added up to 277. We then went on to a second level of analysis, where we developed a citation network to be able to say something more about where the eleven articles find their theoretical and methodological roots. A citation network is a graph that represents the relationships between published works based on citations. It is a directed graph with works as nodes and citations as edges. This network is used in bibliometrics and scientometrics to gain insight into the structure of scientific literature and knowledge diffusion. By analysing citation networks, researchers can study various aspects of the scientific landscape, such as the influence of works, the popularity of topics, the evolution of subject areas, and the emergence of new subfields. They can also assess the influence of researchers, institutions, journals, funding agencies, and other stakeholders. In summary, citation networks are useful for studying the relationships between published works and their influence on science.

In our analysis of the “safety of journalists” studies, we sought to uncover the roots of this emerging field. Our approach involved tracing the citations of the 11 articles in the special issue. We started by analysing the citations of these 11 articles and found approximately 270 relevant papers. By taking advantage of a “snowballing” algorithm combined with a bibliography API (Crossref [n.d.](#); Pallath [n.d.](#); Pallath and Zhang [2022](#)), we then expanded our search by following the citations in these papers for two extra level, resulting in the collection of information on over 44,000 published works. We collected data such as author details, affiliations, article titles, journal names, and publication years to gain a deeper understanding of who, what, where, and when have had an impact on the development of the field over time. The goal of this analysis was to shed light on the key players, works, and historical events that have shaped the “safety of journalists” studies.

Our analysis yielded a number of intriguing findings. We identified clusters of literature, using the Louvain algorithm (Blondel et al. [2008](#)), that had a substantial impact on the articles of the special issue and observed the flow of citations and knowledge between these clusters. Additionally, several articles emerged as significant “bridges,” connecting the clusters and facilitating the transfer of knowledge. These insights allow us to gain a better understanding of the disciplines and fields that are shaping the emergence of “safety of journalists” studies. The findings also highlight the importance of interdisciplinary exchange in shaping this field. Lastly, we aim to make possible a further examination of the specific articles that serve as facilitators in bridging knowledge between different disciplines and clusters of articles.

Three clusters stand out in terms of the number of articles and citations.

First, the cluster “*Cyberbullying and Adolescent Victimization*” focuses on the examination of different forms of bullying, victimization, and its impact on the mental and emotional health of adolescents. The most frequent words and bi-grams include “sexual harassment,” “mental health,” “fear crime,” and “routine activities,” among others, pointing to a broader concern for the effects of victimization on individuals, particularly school-aged youth. The trigrams reinforce this emphasis by highlighting terms such as “high school students,” “middle school students,” “among college students,” and “among African American,” indicating a particular interest in the study of bullying among different demographics of young people.

Additionally, terms such as “General theory of crime,” “social learning theory,” and “structural equation modelling” suggest a focus on understanding the underlying theories and modeling approaches used to study these topics.

The second cluster can be summarized as “*Media and Political Communication*” with a focus on the impact of news media, social media, and other forms of communication on public opinion, political participation, and human rights. It is of course no surprise that a cluster of media and communication related articles is by far the largest of the clusters. The cluster includes studies examining the effects of media on attitudes, job satisfaction, and social support, as well as the role of media in shaping political communication, public sphere, and social movements. The research also investigates the impact of media coverage on social and political issues such as sexual harassment, foreign policy, and elections. The analysis includes both content analysis and comparative studies, and the use of various methodologies such as structural equation modeling, critical discourse analysis, and interpretive phenomenological analysis.

The third cluster appears to focus on the theme of “*Mental Health*”. The bi-grams and tri-grams are related to topics such as posttraumatic stress disorder, stress disorder, health care, asylum seekers, systematic reviews, social support, labor market, mental disorders, health literacy, quality of life, political violence, primary care, psychological distress, qualitative research, risk factors, health status, mental health services, and more. The trigrams, specifically, delve into topics such as posttraumatic stress disorder among asylum seekers and refugees, mental health services for displaced persons, symptoms of stress disorder and depression, mental health problems among Syrian refugees, and randomized controlled trials for treating posttraumatic stress. Overall, this cluster highlights the importance of addressing mental health concerns in various populations and the role of various factors such as access to health care, social support, and political violence in affecting mental health.

In addition to the three dominant clusters, we identified a further six subclusters of articles. These subclusters have been given descriptive titles and are summarized below to provide an idea of the content contained within each. As will be clear from the descriptions below, some of the clusters are heavily influenced by the geographies of the studies selected for the special issue.

Cluster 4: *International Law and Human Rights*. This cluster of sources revolves around topics regarding global legislation, human privileges, and legality in armed conflicts. It features collocations of two or three words and references to journals, reports, and communiques, as well as terms such as “combating lawlessness,” “humanitarian law,” “minimum humanitarian standards,” “legal framework,” and “war on terror.”

Cluster 5: *Suicide Prevention*. The focus of this cluster is suicide risk assessment and avoidance. Main areas of concern are suicide risk, suicide prevention, risk factors, suicidal behavior, suicide attempts, systematic review, and suicidal ideation. Cluster also underscores the significance of mental health, personality disorder, and primary care in suicide prevention. Studies on suicide risk and prevention are typically conducted in the US and emphasize the requirement for public health promotion and risk assessment. Cluster mentions randomized controlled trials and cohort studies in understanding suicide risk factors, especially in men. Dialectical behavior therapy, health behavior change, and suicide prevention programs are highlighted as important interventions. Cluster discusses the prevalence of suicide risk factors, depression and primary care relationship, interpersonal and psychological theories of suicide, and the role of deliberate self-harm in suicide prevention. Systematic reviews of adolescent suicidal behavior are also emphasized as necessary.

Cluster 6: *Turkish Cities and Globalization*. This cluster of papers seems to be examining the theme of urban renewal and political struggles in the context of Turkish cities and globalization. The papers delve into the various aspects of urban transformation, citizenship,

environmentalism, and politics of space in an urban context, focusing on the struggles of the poor, refugees, and social movements. Cluster 7: *Childcare Policies in Post-Communist Europe*. This cluster focuses on analysing childcare policies in post-communist Central European countries, particularly their impact on gender equality and the role of women in society. The papers examine the historical background and current state of welfare policies in countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Germany and how they have shifted towards a more liberal and business-oriented approach.

Cluster 8: *Family Policies and Gender Relations in Post-Communist Europe*. The papers in this cluster examine family policies and childcare arrangements in post-communist Central European countries and their impact on gender relations and work-life balance. The articles seem to be utilizing qualitative and comparative methods to gauge the generosity of policies and evaluate changes in care services.

Cluster 9: *Technology and Mental Health*. The articles in this cluster examine the intersection of technology, mental health, and resilience. Topics explored include secondary traumatic stress among police officers, resilience training, randomized controlled trials, and the impact of virtual reality on mental health. The findings suggest the significance of peer support, positive psychological capital, and judicious design in technology aimed at promoting emotional well-being and resilience. Based on the articles of this special issue, the emergent field of “Safety of Journalists” appears to be a multidisciplinary field that involves the study of numerous issues related to journalists and the media. The most influential clusters of papers focus on three main themes: *Media and Political Communication*; *Mental Health* and *Cyberbullying and Adolescent Victimization*. These themes highlight the importance of addressing certain challenges that journalists face as well as the impact that media can have on society, including mental health concerns, bullying and victimization, and political communication. The studies also suggest that there is a focus on understanding the underlying theories and methods used to study these topics (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Visual representation of the Citation Network in which different communities are highlighted. The percentage of articles in each community is reported within brackets. Graph generated using Gephi [<https://gephi.org/>].

Betweenness - What makes Knowledge Flow between Clusters?

Once we successfully built a Citation Network, we had the opportunity to extract, for each article, centrality metrics describing its importance in the network. Two of the most used metrics in the field are “degree”, reflecting how many connections each node holds, and “betweenness”, representing the importance of a node in connecting the network together (Barrat et al. 2004; Borassi and Natale 2016; Jia et al. 2012). Of particular interest for our analysis is the “betweenness” since it holds a distinct connotation in comparison to other centrality metrics. Rather than merely reflecting the importance of a node in the network, betweenness characterizes a node’s significance as a mediator of information or citation flow between separate clusters or communities of articles.

This is quantified by counting the frequency with which the node appears in the shortest paths linking distinct groups of nodes. Nodes exhibiting a high betweenness score serve as critical conduits, allowing for the exchange of information between otherwise disparate communities (Barrat et al. 2004; Leydesdorff 2007).

The analysis of betweenness in a citation network can provide a nuanced understanding of the network’s structure and dynamics, illuminating the relationships between disparate communities and the intermediating role of specific articles.

While centrality gauges a node’s overall prominence, reflecting its many connections and the frequency of its citation by other nodes, betweenness is a metric which assesses a node’s function as a bridge or connector between disparate communities of articles.

In our analysis, we elected to concentrate on betweenness rather than centrality because we wanted to understand the function of particular references in bridging the flow of information or citations between different research areas. By analysing betweenness, we sought to discern the nodes which played a crucial role in linking different parts of the network and fostering the exchange of knowledge between these disparate communities.

Top Articles on the Betweenness-list

We found “Comparing Media Systems” to be the most important study in terms of betweenness-score (Hallin and Mancini 2004). This comes as no surprise, given the significant impact the book has had on the field of media and communication studies. Its contributions to research on media systems, media policy, and comparative media analysis are evident in the frequency with which it is referenced in these areas. Furthermore, the book’s theoretical framework has had a profound impact on shaping research in the field and has facilitated a greater understanding of the complex relationship between media, politics, and society across different countries. It is worth noting that the impact of “Comparing Media Systems” extends beyond media and communication studies. The findings of this investigation shows that the book has also played a pivotal role in disseminating theories and knowledge from media studies to other disciplines.

The book “Comparing Media Systems” belongs to the largest cluster of references which we named “*Media and Political Communication*” above. Interestingly, the articles and books in the *Media and Political Communication* cluster with the highest betweenness-score must be divided into at least four different groups. Three of the most important references (in terms of betweenness-score), are more general Media Analysis and Media Theory type of articles and books such as “Comparing Media Systems”, “An Emotional Turn in Journalism Studies?” and “The role of self-reports in the study of news production” (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Ryfe 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen 2020). However, a topically narrower group of references seems to be playing an even more important role in the flow of knowledge between cluster in this

system of references. This group includes titles such as “Not Funny? The Effects of Factual Versus Sarcastic Journalistic Responses to Uncivil User Comments” (Ziegele and Jost 2020), “Engagement Moderation: What Journalists Should Say to Improve Online Discussions” (Masullo, Riedl, and Huang 2022), “Online Harassment and Its Implications for the Journalist–Audience Relationship” (Lewis, Zamith, and Coddington 2020), Mob Censorship: Online Harassment of US Journalists in Times of Digital Hate and Populism (Waisbord 2020) and “Roots of Incivility: How Personality, Media Use, and Online Experiences Shape Uncivil Participation” (Frischlich et al. 2021). Keywords are journalism, incivility, and online harassment. It is not difficult to understand why these two groups of references belong to the *Media and Political Communication* cluster. Perhaps more surprisingly, an article from Statistics examining how well certain criteria work when evaluating how well statistical models fit observed data, is found to be among the top articles when it comes to betweenness-score in this cluster (Hu and Bentler 1999). The fact that this article is so much cited indicates the importance of statistical methods for the development of the *Media and Political Communication* cluster. The inclusion of “Using thematic analysis in psychology in this cluster, despite its apparent divergence from the other articles, highlights the significance of thematic analysis as a methodology that transcends disciplinary boundaries, and underscores its potential usefulness in both psychological and media and communication studies research (Braun and Clarke 2006).

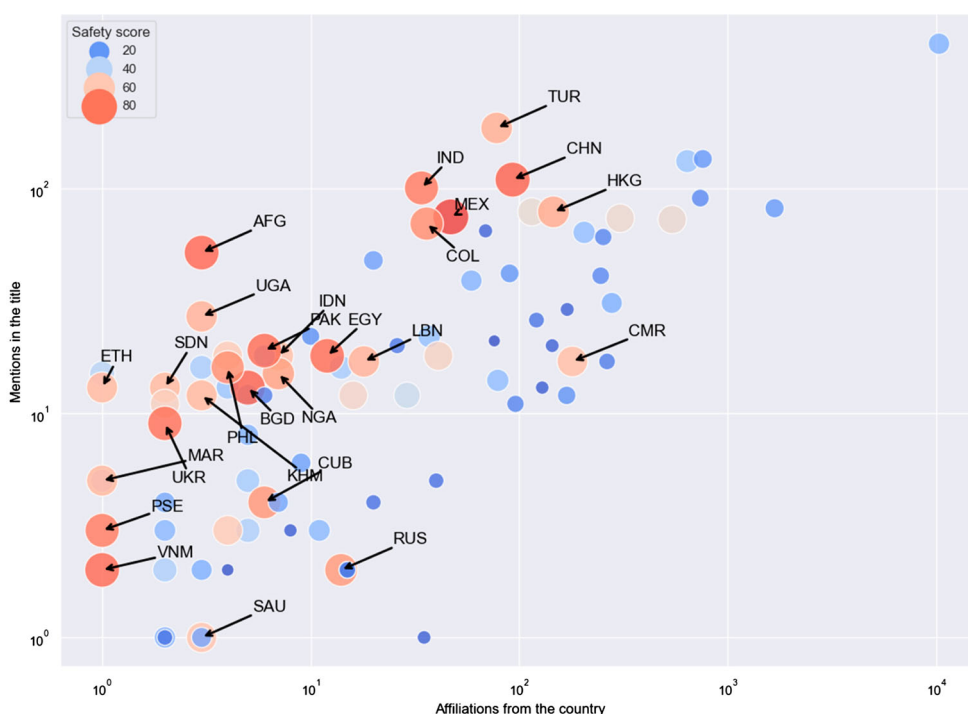
The clustering and betweenness score analysis indicate that many general articles on media and communication studies are being cited in other fields and disciplines, suggesting a flow of knowledge beyond the Media and Political Communication cluster. However, it is noteworthy that statistics and thematic analysis play a crucial role in this cluster. The emphasis on statistics and thematic analysis suggests the importance of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in media and communication research, and the need for interdisciplinary collaborations to better understand the complex relationship between media, politics, and society.

We also found a few references with high betweenness-score in the other clusters. The second most important references (in terms of betweenness-score) in the whole reference network, is a proposal of a “social-ecological framework of theory, assessment, and prevention of suicide” (Cramer and Kapusta 2017). The article provides a comprehensive and integrated framework for understanding and addressing suicide risk that has been widely cited and used in research and practice, also among researchers of journalism. In this citation network, the article is part of the cluster we have earlier named “Cluster 5: Suicide Prevention” with suicide risk, suicide prevention, risk factors, suicidal behavior, suicide attempts, systematic review, and suicidal ideation as principal areas of concern. The social-ecological framework for understanding suicide risk takes a comprehensive and integrated approach, recognizing that suicide prevention efforts should go beyond individual-level risk factors to also address community and societal factors that contribute to suicide risk.

The last article we will mention here, calls for an integrated, multi-system approach to address the unique needs of refugee women (Hawkins et al. 2021). It highlights the need for comprehensive synthesis regarding how individual, interpersonal, community, and organizational factors interact to influence the health of refugee women. This article plays a vital role in building knowledge in cluster 3 “*Mental Health*”.

Our analysis found that articles on suicide prevention and refugee women’s mental health have high betweenness-score and play important roles in building knowledge in their respective clusters. Such articles emphasize the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses individual, interpersonal, community, and societal factors in for example preventing suicide and improving mental health outcomes for refugee women.

Geographies of Researchers & Research Topics



In this figure, we have plotted the results for the countries mentioned either in author affiliations or in titles. We are particularly interested in the countries represented by the dark red circles. This is the group of countries deemed by Reporters Without Borders to be in a very serious (dark red) condition when it comes to safety of journalists (*Methodology Used for Compiling the World Press Freedom Index* | RSF [n.d.](#)).

In this study, we have utilized the safety index of Reporters Without Borders to rank countries according to the safety of journalists. Along with that, we have estimated the number of references that deal with issues related to specific countries by counting references that contain the country's name in the title. Lastly, we have estimated the number of published authors from different countries based on the university affiliations mentioned in the author affiliation fields of the references.

Reporters Without Borders has been monitoring the safety of journalists globally since 2002, providing a safety index that ranks countries according to the safety and protection provided to journalists (*Index* | RSF [n.d.](#)). The safety index considers a range of factors such as violence against journalists, legal restrictions, and censorship, among others. This safety index serves as a useful tool to understand the safety of journalists in different countries.

Our analysis has revealed some noteworthy patterns that can be utilized to inform discussions on the safety of journalists. Our findings indicate that countries with a low ranking in the safety index of Reporters Without Borders have fewer published authors and references dealing with issues related to them. On the other hand, many countries that rank high in the safety index have a higher number of published authors and references. For instance, countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark, which rank high in the safety index, have a relatively larger number of published authors and references dealing with

issues related to them. In contrast, countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq, which rank low in the safety index, have fewer published authors and references.

As we see, many of these countries are concentrated in the bottom left quadrant of the figure. Amongst the countries scoring low on the RSF safety index, China and Mexico stand out by the number of titles referring specifically to China or Mexico and the number of authors affiliated to Chinese or Mexican universities. We believe this is an indication of the relative strength of the university system and research in general in these two countries. Afghanistan, meanwhile, stands out as a country that have received significant interest from researchers but with very few local authors cited in the network. Palestine, Vietnam, and Morocco are examples of countries that seem to have been little researched while at the same time very seldom are mentioned in the affiliations of the authors.

This finding is significant as it highlights the pressing need for increased attention to the safety of journalists and the protection of freedom of expression in countries where journalists face significant challenges. However, the study has some limitations. Firstly, the safety index of Reporters Without Borders is not a comprehensive measure of the safety of journalists, and it does not account for all factors that can impact the safety of journalists. Secondly, our estimation of the number of published authors and references is based on a simplified approach, which may not accurately reflect the true number of authors or references.

It is important to note that a large number of countries ranked by Reporters Without Borders for the safety of journalists are not included in the graph presented in this study. This is primarily because the graph is based on references that contain a country's name in the title and authors' affiliations that mention the country. As a result, countries that are not mentioned in the titles or do not have any author affiliations related to the country are not represented in the graph.

This limitation is particularly concerning for some of the most dangerous countries for journalists since they may not have enough published authors or references that meet the criteria for inclusion in the graph. The top 18 country ranked by safety score which are not represented in the graph above are reported in the table below.

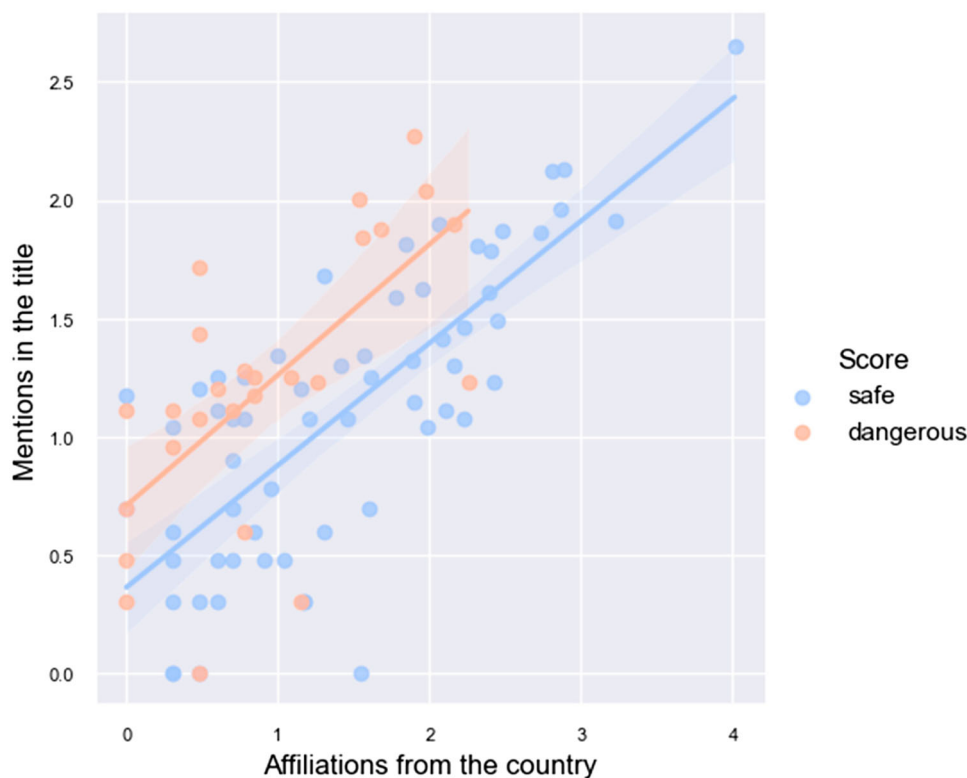
Country name	CODE	Safety Score	Mentions in titles	Mentions in affiliations
Myanmar	MMR	95,37	1	Not present
Eritrea	ERI	88,64	1	Not present
Yemen	YEM	88,46	1	Not present
North Korea	PRK	87,62	Not present	Not present
Syria	SYR	86,61	Not present	Not present
Iran	IRN	86,39	10	Not present
Iraq	IRQ	81,73	88	Not present
Somalia	SOM	81,73	8	Not present
Belarus	BLR	81,15	Not present	Not present
Dem. Rep. Congo	COD	75,66	Not present	Not present
Nicaragua	NIC	72,32	2	Not present
Azerbaijan	AZE	71,52	Not present	Not present
Bahrain	BHR	70,35	5	Not present
Venezuela	VEN	68,78	Not present	1
Guatemala	GTM	67,88	6	Not present
Turkmenistan	TKM	64,31	Not present	Not present
Libya	LBY	63,42	3	Not present
Rwanda	RWA	61,24	19	Not present

It is worth noting that the exclusion of a large number of countries from then graph is a reflection of the fact that the citation network was built upon a narrow group of articles dealing with specific topics and geographies. These topics and geographies often did not require the inclusion of references from the excluded countries. Consequently, the exclusion

of these countries may not necessarily indicate a lack of published authors or references dealing with issues related to them. Rather, it may be a result of the specific focus of the articles included in the citation network. It is important to consider this context when interpreting the findings presented in this study and to avoid generalizing the results to countries that we excluded from the graph. It is also worth noting that while the country Syria has no mentions in the titles, a number of articles in the network deals with issues related to “Syrian Refugees.”

Knowledge Transfer?

While this exploratory study has limitations, it provides insights into the relationship between the safety of journalists in individual countries and the number of affiliated authors and references dealing with that country. Our analysis indicates that there is a linear relationship between affiliations and the number of articles, as seen on a log to log scale. However, the line for relatively safe countries, those with a score below 60, appears to run parallel to but significantly below the line for more unsafe countries, those with a score above 59.



The findings suggest that studies focused on unsafe countries are more likely to be conducted by scholars based at universities in relatively safe countries, rather than the other way around. It indicates that much research about unsafe environments for journalists build on theories and methodologies developed in relatively safe localities and found useful for studies of journalists in those localities. While this may seem like an obvious observation, we believe that it is crucial to understand how knowledge flows between distinct locations in order to improve the quality and impact of research in this area. By recognizing the asymmetrical distribution of research on the safety of journalists, we can identify potential biases

and gaps in knowledge production. This understanding can help to inform efforts to improve the quality and relevance of research, as well as to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of scholars from diverse locations are considered. Overall, the study highlights the importance of considering the geographic and institutional factors that shape knowledge production in the field of journalism and related areas. By doing so, we can foster a more inclusive and robust research community that is better equipped to address the complex challenges facing journalists and freedom of expression globally.

We believe this to be particularly important in relation to the topics and geographies coming out of this study as this universe of references draw extensively on studies dealing with *Mental Health* and *Cyberbullying and Adolescent Victimization*. We need to ask to what extent are theories and findings related to mental health issues stemming from studies in relatively safe locations such as the US or Northern Europe useful when trying to understand safety related issues in Afghanistan, Syria, Nicaragua or Iraq?

Koch and Weingart suggest that the idea of knowledge transfer is a delusion because it assumes that knowledge is a tangible and transferable commodity that can be easily transmitted from one location to another (Koch and Weingart 2016). According to their perspective, this assumption overlooks the complex social, cultural, and institutional factors that shape the production and dissemination of knowledge in different contexts.

Instead, we propose that researchers of the safety of journalists should focus on the idea of knowledge co-construction, which recognizes that knowledge is a dynamic and socially constructed process that involves the interaction and collaboration of diverse actors across different locations and contexts. This perspective highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing the diverse perspectives, experiences, and knowledge systems that shape research and innovation in different fields.

Caveat

It is vital to note that the selection of first-level articles in a citation network analysis can significantly affect the results. In the present study, the first articles were those published in this particular special issue. A different set of articles would have resulted in a different citation network. For a more comprehensive understanding of the emerging subfield of journalist safety, a broader selection of articles should be considered in future projects. However, the present experiment provides a way to study the development of a field or subfield and to analyse its formation at an early stage. In this way, steps can be taken to ensure a diverse representation of topics, geographies, theories, and methodologies in the field, thus promoting inclusiveness and progress.

We recognize that the articles in this special issue may not be fully representative of the sub-field of safety of journalists. Other relevant articles exist that address important topics and are not included here. Additionally, other scholars employ differing methodologies and theories from those represented in this issue.

Consequently, we are not claiming that the citation network presented is fully representative of the sub-field. However, this approach serves as a valuable tool for comprehending the theoretical and methodological foundations and historical origins of this special issue. Despite its experimental nature, we contend that this approach has the potential to provide insight into how fields emerge, and research develops. If nothing else, this method has allowed us to introduce the articles of this special issue in a productive and informative manner.

Little has so far been written about the community of scholars studying and contributing to the increased knowledge base of the safety of journalists. Approaching the growing line of

academics and critical practitioners interested in the topic and their work as an emerging new academic field, allows us as this article has illustrated, to consider both its prospects and challenges in more thorough and analytical way.

Note

1. (Henrichsen and Shelton 2022) was originally planned to be part of the special issue and has consequently been included in the reference network referred to in this introduction.


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