



# Unveiling the Lifeworld of Campus Journalists in a Public Secondary School

June Glaze B. Dasalla<sup>1</sup>, Adrian V. Protacio<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Teacher, King's College of Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines

Email: [preciousjoon14@gmail.com](mailto:preciousjoon14@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Sultan Kudarat State University, Philippines

Email: [adrianprotacio@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:adrianprotacio@sksu.edu.ph)

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**Abstract**— *This transcendental phenomenological study investigates the lived experiences of the writers in campus journalism, focusing on their lifeworld, contextual experiences, and future self-perception. Twelve high school journalists from Bagumbayan National High School were purposively sampled for semi-structured interviews. Through thematic analysis, the study identified 13 emerging themes: five captured the participants' lifeworld- navigating dual responsibilities, shaping professional identity, guiding hands influence, ethical investigative challenges, and mastering journalistic craftsmanship; seven reflected the contexts of their lived experiences, such as holistic journalism growth, ethical journalism impact, journalism's competitive edge, transformative journalism journey, relentless truth-seeking journalism, journalism-life harmony, and path of journalistic discovery; and one encompassed their future self-perception, highlighting strategic career and passion exploration. The findings revealed that the lived experiences of the writers in campus journalism revolve around skill development, ethical awareness, and career exploration, shaped by academic pursuits, competitive challenges, and mentorship, ultimately influencing their professional identity and future career paths. This study offers a framework for understanding student journalism's unique challenges and opportunities, emphasizing the need for targeted training programs that support their holistic development. Future research should explore the long-term impact of campus journalism on students' career trajectories and adaptability.*



**Keywords**— *campus journalists, journalism, lifeworld of campus journalists, lived experiences, phenomenology.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Campus journalism significantly enriches students' academic experiences by fostering critical communication skills, promoting freedom of expression, and engaging with issues relevant to educational communities. Many nations acknowledge their significance by organizing competitions and conferences promoting education, fostering collaboration, and supporting professional development. Despite its recognized value, there remains a limited exploration of the lived experiences of student writers themselves, particularly in the context of their

personal and academic development within dynamic regional landscapes like ASEAN (Estella & Paz, 2019).

While previous research has explored the educational value of journalism (Dela Rosa, Lucero, & Vargas, 2021; Omay, 2020), limited studies have delved into the lived experiences and future self-perceptions of campus journalists in these press conference contexts (Macalindog, 2019; Deuze & Witschge, 2018).

This study sought to explore the lived experiences, contexts, and aspirations of Bagumbayan National High School campus journalists. By applying phenomenology and integrating Dewey's theory of expertise, Moustakas'

phenomenological method, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and the legal foundation of R.A. 7079, the study aimed to contribute insights into how press conferences shape young journalists' personal and professional development.

This study addressed the following sub-questions: (1) What is the lifeworld of the writers in campus journalism? (2) What are the contexts of the lived experiences of the writers in campus journalism? (3) How do the campus journalists view themselves in the future? and (4) What program can be designed for the student journalists?

## II. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

The study utilized the transcendental phenomenological research design. Qualitative research aimed to thoroughly examine, comprehend, and explain social phenomena in their natural environments (Creswell, 2012, as cited in Balinas & Ibojo, 2023). This approach provided a more thorough knowledge of human behavior by enabling accurate data gathering on beliefs and motivations and offering a human-centered viewpoint on the subject matter (Balinas & Ibojo, 2023).

Additionally, phenomenology's philosophical and scientific tradition aimed to investigate and comprehend the essence of human experiences from the viewpoint of people experiencing them (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, this study focused on the experiences of the high school writers in campus journalism who participated in the Division Schools Press Conferences for the school year 2022-2023 of Bagumbayan National High School.

The descriptive technique aimed to comprehend and explain the feelings experienced by the writers in campus journalism. The researcher collected data through purposive sampling and conducted semi-structured interviews. After doing so, the researcher crafted phenomenological narratives to capture the essence of the participants' experiences.

The researcher sought to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of writers in campus journalism, their contexts, and their self-perception of the future. The writers in campus journalism narrated their stories based on their actual experiences.

### 2.2. Research Participants

The purposeful participant sample selection allowed them to offer unique perspectives on the experiences at the heart of the research (Smith et al., 2009). These participants were 12 high school campus journalists of Bagumbayan National High School who participated in the Division Schools Press Conferences held at Don Juan P.

Garcia Memorial Elementary School, Sultan Kudarat division, for the school year 2022-2023, and were currently enrolled for the academic year 2023-2024. The informants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. The volume of replies appeared to align with Dworkin's (2012) suggestion for qualitative research.

The selection of the participants was based on the following criteria: (a) Special Program in Journalism student; (b) number of years practicing campus journalism; (c) number of years as participant in the Division Schools Press Conferences; (d) campus journalist participant in the different events during the Division Schools Press Conference 2022-2023; and (e) willing to share his experiences.

### 2.3. Sampling Technique

The study participants were the 12 high school campus journalists of Bagumbayan National High School in the Division Schools Press Conferences for the school year 2022-2023.

The informants' selection process was called purposive sampling, a selective, judgmental, or demanding sampling (Pedroso & Pacit, 2022). The objective was to choose people with the knowledge required to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013).

### 2.4. Research Instrument

This study employed semi-structured interviews, allowing for a flexible yet targeted approach to data collection. When open-ended questions were used, participants could provide rich and detailed explanations of their experiences by expressing them in their own words. According to Moustakas (1994), in "Phenomenological research methods," the interview was a powerful tool for phenomenological researchers as they attempted to capture the richness and subtleties of participants' experiences.

Moreover, the semi-structured interview was helpful when you were somewhat knowledgeable about a subject, but wanted to allow users to bring up new points. Working with a difficult subject could benefit from semi-structured interviews since they would enable you to explore, enhance understanding, and clarify responses to questions through probes and spontaneous questions (Wilson, 2014).

The researcher meticulously crafted the interview questions utilized in this study, drawing upon a comprehensive literature review and an in-depth understanding of the research objectives. A rigorous validation process was undertaken to enhance the robustness and appropriateness of the questions. This validation involved subjecting the interview questions to scrutiny by experts in the field, which was composed of two master teachers and one campus journalist adviser,

ensuring alignment with the research framework and relevance to the phenomenon under investigation. Through this meticulous validation process, the interview questions were refined and adjusted to maximize their effectiveness in eliciting meaningful responses from participants.

## 2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure for this phenomenological study was meticulously structured to adhere to established protocols, ensuring methodological rigor and ethical integrity.

First, the participants were identified through purposive sampling. The researcher sought permission from the School Principal to carry out the study. Second, before the interview started, informed consent was obtained from each participant, emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality. Third, the researcher described the goal of the research and its methodology. After that, each participant received individual orientation. Fourth, the study's necessary resources, such as the audio recorder and interview guide, were ready. Fifth, semi-structured interviews commenced, and each session was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to represent participants' narratives accurately. Sixth, the application of thematic analysis, guided by phenomenological reduction, facilitated the identification of recurring themes and patterns in the participants' narratives. This ultimately yielded a thorough knowledge of the lived experiences of campus journalists within the dynamic context of school press conferences. Ethical considerations such as member verification and participant confidentiality were crucial throughout the research process to guarantee the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions.

## 2.6. Data Analysis Method

This study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke, focused on finding, examining, and summarizing patterns and themes in the data. It thoroughly described and arranged all the material. This analysis method has six steps that were covered:

In the initial step, familiarization with the data, the researcher immersed himself in the collected data, which included interview transcripts, to generate a complete picture of the lived experiences of the campus journalists during press conferences—multiple readings were required to fully capture the nuances and complexities woven throughout the participants' accounts. The data was analyzed using systematic coding to find important themes and trends. In this step, generating initial codes, keywords, phrases, and situations that captured the spirit of the press conferences that the campus journalists covered shall be highlighted and labeled.

The next step was searching for themes. The codes were then arranged according to possible topics. The researcher searched for themes, feelings, or incidents repeatedly appearing in various participants' narratives. Throughout the school press conferences, these themes reflected general trends in the experiences of the campus journalists. Then came reviewing the themes. They underwent a rigorous review process to ensure the themes appropriately represent the dataset. The themes were refined and adjusted to fit the richness and complexity of the narratives provided by the campus journalists as the researcher went back and forth between the identified themes and the unprocessed data.

Consequently, the defining and naming of themes. Every well-developed concept was described in detail and assigned a succinct title that encapsulates it. Each theme about campus journalists' real-world press conference experiences had to be thoroughly explained at this level.

Lastly, writing the report. The final step involved organizing the findings into a coherent and insightful narrative. The report presented a detailed account of the identified themes, supported by relevant interview quotes. This narrative aimed to convey the multifaceted nature of campus journalists' experiences during press conferences while maintaining clarity and focus in presenting the themes.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis revealed thirteen (13) emerging themes derived from 176 formulated meanings, 147 initial themes, and 21 clustered themes. These themes represent significant patterns in the lived experiences of the campus journalists from Bagumbayan National High School during their participation in press conferences.

### 3.1. Emerging Themes of The Lifeworld of the Campus Journalists in Schools Press Conferences

Five (5) emerging themes were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from 86 formulated meanings, 86 initial themes, and 10 clustered themes. The five emerging themes are the following:

#### 3.1.1. Theme 1: Navigating Dual Responsibilities

This theme captures the continuous effort of campus journalists to balance their academic and journalistic commitments. It consists of two primary clustered themes: Academic and Journalistic Balance and High Expectations and Pressures.

Campus journalists frequently juggle the demands of journalism with their academic obligations. Balancing these responsibilities requires tenacity and skillful time

management. One participant described this challenge: *“If you are a campus journalist, your time will be divided between being a journalist and a student. That is why I find it difficult to manage my time. Although you are excused from class, you must submit activities and outputs to other subject teachers. That is very challenging”* (P8). This highlights the struggle of maintaining academic performance while fulfilling journalistic duties. One participant described the stress of keeping up with schoolwork: *“As a campus journalist, we have a lot of delayed outputs that we have to submit since we are always out of class and doing our things for the school paper and contests. I struggle to manage my time and do my schoolwork”* (P10). Another participant shared how competitions make it even harder to balance tasks: *“When the press con is fast approaching, we, campus journalists, spend time practicing and preparing, even to the point of being excused from the other classes. That is why I find it hard to answer my periodic exams. It is not easy to cope. There are also pending activities, and you do not know how to do them because you were not in the class, even though you will do it overnight”* (P7).

These accounts align with Medrano’s (2019) findings, highlighting that engagement in journalism-related activities can significantly affect students’ attendance and academic performance. Mateo et al. (2019) similarly emphasize the need for support to help campus journalists manage their dual responsibilities. Beyond time constraints, campus journalists also encounter added stress from expectations and workload. One participant noted: *“Another is that you will be given additional work as a campus journalist. For example, I thought I was already done with my article last time, only to find out I was given another to do. Things like these, sudden tasks will just eat up your time for other school work”* (P8).

Mangompit (2023) argues that student journalists face various obstacles—including stress, adaptability challenges, and connectivity issues—which can further complicate their academic journey. Despite the challenges, campus journalists develop vital qualities such as self-discipline, critical thinking, and organizational skills, which are invaluable for their future career pursuits.

The implications of these dual responsibilities extend beyond personal development, influencing educational practices and institutional support systems. Medrano (2019) suggests that schools often implement remedial and enrichment programs to help student journalists make up for missed lessons and assignments. This emphasizes how crucial institutional support is in juggling academic and journalistic obligations. One participant shared the struggle of maintaining grades, stating, *“Since we are in the SPJ, journalism is our major*

*subject. There are also other subjects. When you are a qualifier in the DSPC or RSPC, you still have to manage your time to comply with all the requirements so that you will be able to maintain your grades in other subjects, not just in the major”* (P6).

Additionally, Mateo et al. (2024) contend that mentorship and the creation of media-citizen councils can help student journalists properly manage their duties. However, some students are overwhelmed with tasks beyond their initial responsibilities. One participant shared, *“Also, my time management is my biggest problem even in school. I cannot comply with the requirements as a student because sometimes we do more writing practices or drawing exercises than being myself as a regular student”* (P12). By acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges faced by student journalists, educational institutions can implement policies that promote flexibility and well-being, ultimately enhancing student success.

### 3.1.2. Theme 2: Shaping Professional Identity

This encapsulates the transformative process through which campus journalists form and refine their self-concept as future professionals in the field of journalism. This theme comprised three (3) clustered themes that captured essential aspects of this professional identity formation: Career Growth and Aspirations, Journalism Motivation and Passion, and Personal Development and Growth.

Campus journalists’ career goals, reasons for entering the industry, and personal development through immersive journalism experiences all greatly impact how they build a professional identity. Hanusch et al. (2015) conducted a comparative study across eight countries, revealing that journalism students are largely driven by their love for the field, confidence in their writing abilities, and a strong desire to make a difference in society. Similarly, many campus journalists recognize journalism as a pathway to their future careers. As one participant shared, *“I think it is directly related to the course in the future. I plan to do broadcasting someday, but sometimes I become practical, and the things I have learned from journalism will help me if I take the HUMSS strand in senior high school, for instance, or in a program for college”* (P1). Although some student journalists enter the field out of curiosity or external influence, they gradually develop an appreciation for the profession.

One participant admitted, *“Actually, I have no choice about why I became a campus journalist. My parents wanted me to become one. I do not have any writing talent, but because I went into journalism, I saw my improvements”* (P5). This journey of self-discovery often leads students to embrace journalism as an academic pursuit and a meaningful career path. Another student highlighted, *“What I think is mostly directly related to*



*journalism is my desire or dream to be a newspaper writer in the future” (P3).*

Beyond career aspirations, journalism enhances students’ critical thinking and awareness. Fierens et al. (2023) examined how Belgian journalism interns saw professional ethics, emphasizing that ethical issues are crucial to forming professional identities. This aligns with a participant’s realization: *“My knowledge about journalism widened and my writing skills improved more. My perspective towards media changed. We should know both sides of the story before writing about them” (P3).* These experiences illustrate how campus journalism fosters professional growth by equipping students with the skills and ethical principles necessary to navigate the media industry.

To support the formation of professional identities, educational institutions should integrate real-world media experiences with career development programs. Hanusch et al. (2015) stress the significance of curricula that address both the love for journalism and the desire to achieve social change. Additionally, Chioma et al. (2015) highlight the need for mentorship programs that guide students through challenges, such as job stability and gender discrimination, ensuring an inclusive environment. By fostering ethical training, practical exposure, and mentorship opportunities, institutions can play a significant role in shaping the generation of journalists.

### 3.1.3. Theme 3: Guiding Hands Influence

The theme emphasizes the significance of mentorship, collaboration, and support systems in shaping student journalists’ experiences. According to Valencia-Forrester (2020), practice-based learning, such as internships and university-led programs, plays a significant role in training future journalists, especially as traditional newsrooms shrink and media landscapes evolve. Similarly, Casinghino (2015) emphasizes that structured feedback and collaborative projects enhance students’ media literacy and improve learning outcomes. Zheng et al. (2019) also assert that student journalists who engage in collaborative journalism projects develop technical and interpersonal skills, including teamwork, adaptability, and communication. These studies collectively suggest that mentorship and collaborative environments are crucial in fostering confident and capable student journalists.

The experiences of student journalists reflect these insights. One participant noted the influence of their campus paper adviser, stating, *“Maybe, Sir Ralph (campus paper adviser) because he has a lot of unbelievable experiences and he is to be proud of” (P3).* Another journalist shared admiration for a fellow student, explaining, *“I was impressed by Kuya Pono because he*

*was able to join the National Schools Press Conference last year” (P1).* These examples demonstrate how mentorship and role models inspire aspiring journalists.

Collaborative experiences also play a crucial role in journalism training. One participant described their teamwork experience, saying, *“When there are group works in journalism, yes, school-based. We met and grouped to research on the news. After which, we are writing news together. That makes me enjoy” (P11).* Another participant emphasized the value of competitions, stating, *“As a participant in the DSPC, desktop collaborating English contest, it was fun since I appreciate our teamwork, the laugh, the joy, and the learning we get from each other” (P10).* These reflections align with Casinghino’s (2015) assertion that collaboration fosters technical proficiency and critical thinking skills.

Moreover, student journalists recognize the motivational role of teachers and peers. One participant shared, *“Ma’am Sales told us that it is good to be a campus journalist. That is why I am here” (P8).* Another highlighted the encouragement from family, stating, *“My mother encouraged me to draw and to join DSPC” (P12).* These experiences reinforce the significance of guidance from educators and family members in shaping a journalist’s path.

Finally, press conferences serve as an avenue for both learning and motivation. A participant remarked, *“Another is when we won as third place in radio broadcasting in the press conferences. It is my first to win a press con” (P4).* Another stated, *“First, during competition, it is when you win. It makes me very happy” (P8).* These narratives aligned with Zheng et al.’s (2019) findings that structured collaborative experiences enhance students’ leadership, problem-solving skills, and engagement.

By fostering mentorship and collaborative networks, educational institutions can support student journalists in developing their professional identities and technical skills. Valencia-Forrester (2020) argues that models like pop-up newsrooms and purpose-driven projects provide accessible, real-world learning experiences that prepare students for the evolving media industry. Casinghino (2015) and Zheng et al. (2019) further emphasize that mentorship and teamwork strengthen journalism competencies and build resilience and adaptability. Thus, prioritizing mentorship and collaboration within journalism education ensures that students are well-equipped for future challenges in the field.

### 3.1.4. Theme 4: Ethical Investigative Challenges

Ethical investigative challenges in campus journalism arise from the tension between truth-seeking and responsible reporting, as student journalists navigate dilemmas related to bias, privacy, and institutional

constraints. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2021) stress that journalism must balance truth-telling with minimizing harm, yet campus journalists often face censorship and a lack of legal protection when uncovering sensitive issues. One student journalist acknowledged this challenge, stating, *“Also, the issues that we cover as campus journalists are very controversial; sometimes we have to go to the office of the concerned people or the principal’s office to ask about the school’s budget”* (P6).

Similarly, Hanitzsch et al. (2019) highlight how institutional influences shape press freedom, which in a school setting may limit the scope of investigative reporting. Some student journalists struggle with reporting on issues that cannot be published due to confidentiality, as one participant noted, *“One is the issues that cannot be published and make others aware because it is very confidential; issues that others should not know about”* (P5). Student journalists risk facing backlash without proper ethical frameworks, making it crucial to provide structured ethical guidelines and training.

To address these issues, journalism programs must incorporate ethical education, guaranteeing that students possess the critical thinking abilities necessary to tackle intricate investigative conundrums, as Ward (2018) suggested. One student journalist emphasized the importance of verifying information, explaining, *“I correct my friends whenever they hear news and consider it true without verifying it, and they thank me after”* (P11). However, Deuze and Witschge (2020) argue that strict ethical constraints can sometimes impede investigative activities, resulting in a contradiction between institutional restraints and journalistic integrity. Some student journalists expressed difficulty in covering sensitive issues such as early arranged marriages, as one participant shared, *“Additionally, the issues that we sometimes cover are too private, especially when it is school-based and you know the person. I find it difficult to interview because their privacy will be released in the article”* (P7).

Schools must promote press freedom while imparting ethical responsibility so student journalists can develop investigative perseverance and accountability. One participant reflected on the pressure of crafting news reports, stating, *“It is stressful to be a campus journalist. Sometimes, we still need the guidance and assistance of our co-campus journalist when crafting our news report”* (P4). Educational institutions can help campus journalists navigate ethical dilemmas while maintaining journalistic integrity by equipping them with ethical knowledge and investigative skills.

### 3.1.5. Theme 5: Mastering Journalistic Craftsmanship

This involves refining both writing and visual storytelling skills, which are essential for effective news reporting. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2021) argue that journalistic excellence is rooted in disciplined writing, observation, and verification, emphasizing that student journalists must hone their ability to present clear and compelling narratives. This sentiment is reflected in the experience of one student journalist who shared, *“I did not have any idea about journalism before. When I joined campus journalism, I learned about journalism. I think I had improvements. I learned how to write, which is helpful because some subjects require writing essays or compositions. So, I think I greatly improved my writing skills”* (P1).

Furthermore, Richards (2022) emphasizes that improved writing ability results from the fusion of analytical and critical thinking abilities, which are frequently fostered in journalism education through experiential learning. One participant affirmed this: *“I had more experiences in writing. I became better”* (P5). Similarly, another noted the role of journalism in enhancing both linguistic and observational skills, saying, *“I think I became more observant; my grammar was more improved. I also became updated with news. Like that. Another thing is that I do better in my speaking skills in radio broadcasting”* (P6). These statements highlight the impact of journalism training in developing writing precision, news awareness, and communication skills.

While writing is still a fundamental journalistic skill, Briggs (2019) underscores the increasing importance of multimedia literacy, claiming that contemporary journalism necessitates striking a balance between textual and visual narrative. Beyond writing, student journalists encounter challenges in incorporating artistic elements into their work. One campus cartoonist describes a specific difficulty in press conferences, sharing, *“One challenge I face as a cartoonist is executing every element in drawing during the press conferences. The time is so short.”* This aligns with García and Stark’s (2020) findings that many student journalists lack formal training in visual journalism, making it difficult to integrate artistic components effectively.

Additionally, Deuze (2021) contends that students must develop technical proficiency in photography, video production, and digital editing due to the increasing digitalization of journalism. These viewpoints suggest journalism education should adopt a more multidisciplinary approach, fusing traditional writing instruction with modern digital and artistic skills to prepare students for today’s media landscapes.

### 3.2. Emerging Themes of The Lifeworld of the Campus Journalists in Schools Press Conferences

Seven (7) emerging themes were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from 55 formulated meanings, 55 initial themes, and nine clustered themes.

#### 3.2.1. Theme 1: Holistic Journalism Growth

Holistic Journalism Growth encapsulates how campus journalists develop both personally and professionally through their engagement in press conferences. Their experiences fostered essential skills, adaptability, and a broader understanding of the journalistic field, shaping their identities as future media practitioners. This theme is rooted in two clustered themes: Personal and Professional Growth and Skills Development.

Holistic journalism growth encompasses personal and professional development as campus journalists navigate the rigorous demands of school press conferences. Williams, Guglietti, and Haney (2018) highlight that journalism students' professional identities are shaped by their experiences in reporting, writing, and engaging with real-world journalistic challenges. Deuze (2021) argues that journalism is as much a mindset as a craft, and the quest for greatness, which frequently entails anxiety and uncertainty, promotes resilience and skill development. Additionally, adjusting to demanding broadcasting duties and novel subjects pushes students to think critically about their work, supporting Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2021) assertion that journalism is based on self-discipline, moral obligation, and public duty. These findings suggest that the lived experiences of campus journalists not only refine their technical skills but also cultivate their confidence, adaptability, and ethical awareness.

The accounts of campus journalists further illustrate this holistic development. Many students experience immense pressure when competing in press conferences. P1 admitted, *"Before, when I was in elementary, I was joining the contest confidently. But when I entered high school and joined a press conference, I felt pressure."* Similarly, P6 stated, *"I was culture-shocked because there are many things to accomplish: quizzes and reporting. That is why I am pressured and afraid when I am reporting."* This sentiment aligns with Maniou, Stark, and Touwen's (2020) argument that journalism's high stakes encourage professional discipline, especially when students are required to think critically and produce correct content under pressure. Overcoming this pressure, however, leads to confidence and mastery. P9 reflected, *"Before, I was very timid, very quiet. When I entered SPJ, there were many reporters, and you could not say no. So, you have to do the task, and I have discovered that I excel in speaking and have been making good progress."*

Beyond technical skills, campus journalists develop resilience through personal sacrifices. P8 shared, *"Sometimes, I do not have time to spare for my family since I am busy writing articles."* Meanwhile, P11 described the physical toll of journalism training: *"I have eye bags. When we practice, I stay up late at night, and even when I am very sleepy, I endure it because I want to make excellent outputs."* These experiences underscore the commitment required to thrive in journalism, mirroring the discipline expected in a professional newsroom. Williams et al. (2018) stress that students' confidence and capacity to function in challenging journalistic situations are greatly influenced by experiential learning, and these experiences contribute to their overall growth.

The theme of holistic journalism growth also highlights the importance of curiosity, adaptability, and perseverance. P7 noted, *"I have been curious since the start; until now, I have still been curious about things."* This curiosity drives one to pursue stories and develop deeper analytical skills, reinforcing Deuze and Witschge's (2018) perspective that journalism is an evolving craft requiring continuous learning. P4 reflected on their transformation: *"As a campus journalist, personal growth is evident in me, from hesitation to confidence. I was shy to ask questions, but now I have learned to speak up."* Such narratives reflect how students transition from uncertainty to proficiency, ultimately shaping their professional identity.

As students juggle their personal and professional obligations, the strain of journalistic duties also offers growth opportunities. According to P10, *"My advice to the younger ones, do not be shy when you interview people."* This statement highlights the evolving self-assurance of campus journalists. Similarly, P12, a cartoonist, noted, *"I have learned so much here more than any regular student, because there are special subjects that are given to us just like journalism. Another is being a cartoonist because I have learned so much about the topic that my coach gave me."* These reflections demonstrate that students cultivate technical expertise and personal growth through sustained effort, mentorship, and hands-on experience.

According to these perspectives, journalism education must incorporate both technical and psychological training to prepare students for the realities of the field. Schools can equip campus journalists with the resources needed to thrive in the evolving media landscape by fostering a learning environment that supports skill acquisition and personal development. By embracing the challenges of press conferences, students emerge as confident, disciplined, and ethically aware individuals ready to navigate the dynamic world of journalism.

### 3.2.2. Theme 2: Ethical Journalism Impact

It reflects how campus journalists navigated ethical challenges and responsibilities in their reporting. The concept of Ethical Journalism Impact emphasizes how important honesty, precision, and responsibility are to campus journalism. Student journalists frequently encounter ethical dilemmas, including threats to editorial independence, the need for thorough information verification, and the obligation to advocate through their reporting. To meet these obstacles, a strong dedication to ethical decision-making and professional standards is necessary.

Some participants reflected on their evolving ethical awareness in journalism. P3 admitted their perspective shifted after realizing the impact of their words: *"Before, I did not care about the people, even though they received words which hurt them, because they are wrong. But now, even though I know they are right, if I uttered hurtful words, I was already guilty, especially when I already knew both sides of the coin."* Similarly, P8 emphasized the importance of verifying both sides of a story: *"Before, I was like, when I hear one side of the story, I immediately believe. Nowadays, I should know both sides of the story. Also, accurate information should be pushed forward so you will not get in trouble."*

This aligns with Díaz-Campo and Segado-Boj (2015), who argue that digital journalism introduces news ethical challenges, requiring updates to journalistic codes of ethics to address misinformation and bias. The responsibility to report truthfully becomes even more significant when personal relationships are involved. P3 shared an experience writing an editorial about a close friend, revealing the emotional and ethical difficulties that arise: *"Once, when Sir and I were writing an editorial story, he gave me an assignment on the story, and the person involved was a close friend. Writing an editorial is like judging someone; sadly, my close friend did something wrong. That is why I was guilty of telling her the truth."*

Beyond campus settings, ethical journalism education influences the broader media landscape. Creech (2021) promotes a civic and public values curriculum, preparing campus journalists to engage in ethical decision-making. This perspective is reflected in P5's realization of journalistic integrity: *"What I have learned is to be a voice for others, that will not let money work instead of doing things right."* Ethical journalism also involves recognizing media biases and external pressures. P3 recounted a personal experience that altered their perception of journalists: *"My mother was killed without justice, that is why I hated the media men, because it seemed like they had received money from the big people, so they would not speak the truth. That is the reason why I hated them. But*

*today, things have changed. I have realized that it was right for them not to speak the truth because their lives might be in danger, so my perspective about them changed."* This account echoes broader concerns. Brainstorming is a journalistic safety tool and reporters' ethical dilemmas when covering sensitive issues. Peterlin and Peters (2019) suggest that incorporating creative teaching strategies, such as analyzing media portrayals in TV shows like *The Newsroom*, can help student journalists address complexities.

Lastly, ethical journalism fosters awareness of societal issues. P10 reflected on the privilege and responsibility of being a competitive journalist, which promotes professional development and friendship among journalists: *"I became aware of the issues in my surroundings, even in the country. As a campus journalist, I realized there is always a positive and negative side. You get to know the things that others need to know."* By emphasizing ethical consciousness in journalism education, student journalists can develop the critical thinking skills needed to uphold responsible reporting standards and navigate the moral complexities of the profession.

### 3.2.3. Theme 3: Journalism's Competitive Edge

This theme captures how campus journalists navigated the high-stakes press conference environment, where competition drove skill enhancement, resilience, and adaptability.

The interaction of fundamental abilities, teamwork, and learning shapes journalism's competitive edge and reflects the varied experiences of campus journalists. One essential technique that helps journalists generate concepts, hone their viewpoints, and create compelling stories. One participant noted, *"Brainstorming. If you are there already, you do not know what to do, that is why you are required to brainstorm so that you can have more ideas"* (P6). Craft and Davis (2016) stress that to maintain truth and credibility, journalism is a verification discipline that necessitates critical thinking and idea production to maintain truth and credibility furthermore, because press conferences offer a forum for healthy rivalry and mutual learning. As a campus journalist described, *"Press conferences are a friendly competition and memories"* (P8). Hanitzsch and Vos (2017) emphasize that journalism is a team effort as much as an individual one, with cooperation bolstering industry standards and rivalry providing motivation.

Keeping up with current affairs and obtaining pertinent information strengthens journalistic proficiency and the profession's influence on public opinion. One participant shared, *"Gathering data and being involved in news being talked about"* (P9), highlighting the importance of staying engaged with timely events. Carlson (2020)



asserts that journalism flourishes when journalists actively participate in events as they happen, guaranteeing that they give society relevant and timely information. The findings suggest that experiences in competitive journalism enhance social credibility and emotional fortitude in addition to honing technical abilities. Writing under pressure is common experience for campus journalists, with one stating, *"We are just writing and writing,"* (P5), while another reflected, *"When you are writing, you might feel pressure and at the same time you are excited. Mixed emotions. So, I think it is good to be a campus journalist"* (P6). This supports the conclusions of Harcup (2021), who emphasizes that to educate prospective journalists for industry demands, journalistic training should incorporate real-world issues.

Additionally, as journalists are expected to maintain ethical standards and provide reliable information, participating in journalism-related events fosters a sense of responsibility and trustworthiness. One campus journalist advised, *"Read more books because you will need that in the future. You need to read a lot. You need to seek more information. Be friendly. Be respectful to people and the things around you"* (P7). Tandoc and Thomas (2021) emphasize that journalists establish credibility by being dependable, open, and dedicated to reporting the truth. This credibility is something that student journalists also recognize, as one noted, *"It is good to be a campus journalist because people will trust you when they know that you are a campus journalist"* (P11).

Furthermore, competitive journalism is not just about winning but also about personal growth. As another participant expressed, *"I am happy. When I first joined the DSPC, it seemed like nothing to me because I was drawn into the experience and what it is like to join a contest"* (P8). Competitive journalism experiences help campus journalists develop holistically by promoting information acquisition and interpersonal skills, giving them the professionalism and integrity needed for professional practice.

#### 3.2.4. Theme 4: Transformative Journalism Journey

This theme captured how campus journalists underwent personal and professional growth through their participation in press conferences.

The Transformative Journalism Journey reflects the profound emotional, social, and professional growth that campus journalists experience. Journalism is not just about reporting facts—it is a journey of self-discovery, adaptability, and perspective-building. Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen (2021) emphasize that journalists engage in emotional labor that shapes their storytelling and interactions. This is evident in how student journalists navigate their emotions, as P4 shares, *"Nervousness,*

*shyness, being friendly to others, and the way I interact with others."* Press conferences and journalistic work provide an avenue to overcome these challenges, fostering confidence and resilience.

Beyond emotional growth, journalism also transforms perspectives on society. Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) argues that journalism connects deeply with audiences by capturing hidden narratives and emotions. This aligns with P1's realization: *"It changed my views or perspective on many things, like politics; how the everyday scenarios are similar to TV series. Accidents happen, and kept secrets are revealed. Just like that."* Through reporting, campus journalists develop a more critical understanding of real-world events, seeing beyond the surface to uncover deeper societal patterns.

Moreover, journalism fosters adaptability and lifelong learning. Thomson (2021) highlights the importance of resilience in high-pressure reporting environments, a skill journalists cultivate over time. P7 captures this mindset, stating, *"Life is not easy. You should not focus on things that you have and on things that your eyes see. You should explore more and think widely because life has many better opportunities."* Journalism encourages a broader worldview, pushing individuals to seek knowledge and challenge their assumptions.

Ultimately, the transformative journey of campus journalists extends beyond professional skill-building—it shapes their ethical awareness, resilience, and role in society. Voltmer, Christensen, and Wasserman (2019) emphasize the media's role in shaping public narratives and fostering critical discourse. As student journalists navigate emotional and intellectual challenges, they grow as individuals and contribute to a more informed and ethical media landscape.

#### 3.2.5. Theme 5: Relentless Truth-Seeking Journalism

This theme captures how campus journalists are driven by a commitment to uncovering and reporting the truth despite challenges. Their pursuit of accuracy, fairness, and integrity reflects their dedication to responsible journalism. It embodies an unwavering dedication to factual accuracy, ethical reporting, and investigative depth, ensuring journalism remains a pillar of democracy. Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) emphasizes that journalists must navigate evolving digital landscapes, utilizing fact-checking tools and data-driven verification to combat misinformation. Similarly, Carlson (2017) asserts that public skepticism increasingly challenges journalistic authority, necessitating greater transparency in sourcing and editorial processes. Given that journalists must constantly adjust to shifting public expectations while upholding their position as social watchdogs, this change emphasizes the growing significance of informed research procedures and truth-

seeking awareness. As P7 noted, *“For me, it is about learning to read more or to research things as a campus journalist. You need to know the facts first.”* This underscores the necessity of thorough verification before disseminating information.

Beyond media organizations, truth-seeking journalism has an impact on public confidence and social discourse. Vos and Thomas (2018) suggest that viewers are more willing to interact with transparent news organizations about their corrections and verification processes, which emphasizes the importance of truth reporting. However, truth-seeking is not without its moral and ethical dilemmas. As P3 reflected, personal experiences with media bias can shape perceptions. *“My mother was killed without justice, that is why I hated the media men, because it seemed like they had received money from the big people so that they would not speak the truth. That is the reason why I hated them. But today, things have changed. I have realized that it was right for them not to speak the truth because their lives might be in danger.”* This illustrates journalists' difficult reality when navigating ethical constraints and personal safety. Similarly, P2 acknowledged the prevalence of misinformation, stating, *“In journalism, it is two-faced; you would not know which one is true or fake. One must do deeper research to know the truth behind every controversy.”*

Despite these challenges, truth-seeking journalism strengthens democratic accountability and fosters an informed society. Wasserman (2019) notes that in politically divided settings, journalists encounter growing antagonism, searching for the truth, a moral and professional dilemma. Still, those who uphold investigative rigor and ethical integrity reinforce public trust. As P6 affirmed, *“The first thing is that if you hear or know any news, you should check whether it is fact or fake because nowadays, the spread of fake news is rampant, and many people are manipulated by it. You better check if it is factual.”* In an era of widespread disinformation, the role of journalists as gatekeepers of truth remains critical, ensuring that news serves its fundamental purpose of informing rather than misleading the public.

### 3.2.6. Theme 6: Journalism Life-Harmony

This explored the challenge of balancing the often-demanding nature of journalism work and the need to maintain personal well-being. The balance journalists aim to attain between their hard work obligations and personal lives is known as journalism-life harmony. The nature of journalism frequently involves erratic schedules, demanding work settings, and the need to fulfill deadlines, all of which can interfere with personal routines and family relationships.

Snyder et al. (2019) highlight that digital technology has further blurred the lines between work and personal life, making it harder for journalists to detach from their professional responsibilities. Journalists' well-being and interpersonal relationships may suffer due to overwork and stress from this constant connectedness. As P6 said, *“It is stressful to manage our time because you will be divided between being a campus journalist and a student. Workloads are heavy, added with piles of school tasks to accomplish.”*

The emotional and physical toll of journalism extends beyond time management. Chaudhary (2023) found that female journalists frequently work extra and have their time invaded by job-related obligations, which results in lost family time and elevated stress levels. This is evident in P2's experience: *“We are always stressed because of our massive workloads as campus journalists. We cannot attend classes in other subjects and find it hard to comply with the outputs for the other subjects. I also sometimes had a mental block.”* Similarly, P1 and P5 emphasized the impact of journalism on their sleep, with P5 stating, *“Lack of sleep. I usually stay up late at night to read and read more articles to learn. Sometimes, I worked up late to finish the articles.”*

Moreover, the emotional strain of journalism is heightened when expectations are unmet. As P1 recalled, *“When we lost, we were disappointed because we expected to win. Of course, we had our rigorous training. This experience was my hardships, suffering, and sacrifices during the training.”* Such experiences highlight how journalism, while rewarding, can lead to emotional fatigue when efforts do not yield expected results.

Addressing these challenges requires structural adjustments in journalism programs and media institutions. Hughes et al. (2021) argue that while professional identity can help journalists cope with stress, excessive workloads often diminish these coping mechanisms. Huda and Azad (2015) further emphasize that unclear objectives, tight deadlines, and inadequate managerial support contribute to an unbalanced work-life dynamic. To foster a more sustainable environment, organizations and academic institutions must implement strategies such as flexible schedules and mental health support to help journalists maintain professional excellence and personal well-being.

### 3.2.7. Theme 7: Journalistic Discovery Path

This theme encapsulates how campus journalists evolved in their careers as they experimented, adapted, and refined their journalistic skills and approaches. Through the journalistic discovery route, aspiring journalists can explore new learning possibilities, deepen their grasp of real-world situations, and acquire a wide range of life views. As an investigative field, journalism enables

people to interact with various subjects critically and form a comprehensive viewpoint on current social issues.

According to Deuze and Witschge (2019), journalists undergo a lifelong learning process as they hone their craft by engaging in investigative work and adjusting to changing media environments. Through exposure to real-world situations, journalists gain a greater understanding of world events and cultural quirks, which improves their capacity to report sensitively and accurately. Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2019) further assert that journalistic inquiry develops flexibility and fortitude, empowering reporters to handle challenging circumstances while maintaining moral principles.

The theme implies that an investigative journalistic path fosters personal and intellectual development. Investigative and field reporting activities push journalists to question assumptions and embrace a more holistic perspective. According to Harcup (2021), journalism experiential learning fosters critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, both of which are necessary for successful reporting. Furthermore, examining many viewpoints encourages empathy and inclusivity in narrative, supporting Tandoc, Jenkins, and Craft's (2021) contention that multiple voices and narratives should be reflected in responsible journalism. In addition to broadening their professional knowledge, journalists who engage in exploratory learning opportunities strengthen their bonds with the communities they cover and uphold journalism's moral and revolutionary role in society.

P12 underscored the expansive learning opportunities within journalism, stating, *"I encourage you to join here (SPJ) because it is nice (to be a campus journalist); it will give you more learning and more to explore. Your skills will improve, especially in drawing, and you will learn many techniques."* This perspective highlights how journalism fosters skill enhancement and ongoing learning. Similarly, P1 reflected on the transformative impact of journalism, explaining, *"It changed my views or perspective on many things, like politics; how the everyday scenarios are like a TV series. Accidents happen, and kept secrets are revealed. Just like that."* This observation illustrates how journalism broadens perspectives and deepens critical thinking about societal realities. P7 further emphasized the importance of exploration and intellectual growth, asserting, *"Life is not easy. You should not focus on things that you have and on things that your eyes see. You should explore more and think widely because life has many better opportunities."*

Beyond expanding their professional knowledge, journalists who embrace exploratory learning strengthen their connections with the communities they cover,

reinforcing journalism's ethical and transformative role in society.

### 3.3. Emerging Theme on Campus Journalists' Future Self-Perception

One (1) emerging theme was articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation.

#### 3.3.1 Emerging Theme 1: Strategic Career and Passion Exploration

The only theme underscored the strategic nature of campus journalists' career planning. Campus journalists' perspectives on their future careers reflect a balance between practical decision-making and personal aspirations. As both a profession and a passion, journalism requires individuals to weigh career stability against the fulfillment of public service and storytelling. Zelizer (2018) notes that journalists often struggle to maintain their commitment to truth-seeking while securing stable employment, leading many to explore alternative career paths within and beyond the media sector. Hanusch (2019) further emphasizes that external factors, such as job market conditions, changes in the media industry, and ethical issues, significantly shape journalists' long-term career planning.

The findings suggest that financial security, family influence, and personal passion shape campus journalists' future career choices. Some students feel constrained by parental expectations, as P1 expressed: *"My parents once told me to be practical. The college program I should take should be a way of acquiring money easily, because nowadays, life is much harder. But deep inside me, I wanted to pursue journalism. Maybe after finishing the course, my parents permit, I might as well chase after journalism."*

For others, journalism poses ethical and safety concerns. P2 admitted, *"I am so not sure because of the risks and possible harm it might bring in consequence of the truth."* Similarly, P9 hesitated, stating, *"I am thinking about it, but I am also scared about some news that journalists receive threats."* These concerns highlight how safety considerations impact students' willingness to pursue journalism as a profession.

Some participants see journalism as a valuable experience rather than a long-term career. P4 reflected, *"Maybe, I can still use my knowledge from SPJ in writing, especially English and grammar. It will also be helpful in my college journey, especially regarding how I should talk with people."* Likewise, P8 stated, *"I have learned so much, so it is going to be a waste if I do not utilize it."*

However, some students have already decided on alternative career paths. P10 affirmed, *"I think journalism is not for me. I do not have the talents to become one, so I will pursue a different career."* Meanwhile, others

remained undecided, such as P6: *"I'm debating between law and journalism. Because I am not good at Math, I think I will be in English."*

These findings underscore that financial realities, personal interest, and risk assessments shape career decisions among campus journalists. According to Deuze and Witschge (2020), modern journalism careers extend beyond traditional newsroom roles to digital media, content creation, and strategic communication, offering broader career prospects. Usher (2021) further suggests that the creative aspect of journalism allows students to explore multimedia storytelling beyond news reporting. Ultimately, career flexibility, lifelong learning, and strategic decision-making play essential roles in shaping the professional futures of campus journalists.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Campus journalism shaped students' identities through resilience, ethical decision-making, and teamwork. It fostered adaptability, discipline, and a commitment to truth, despite ethical dilemmas and work-life balance challenges. While it reinforced democratic values, institutional support was crucial for sustainability. Ultimately, it equipped campus journalists with essential skills and a lifelong passion for storytelling.

The contexts of campus journalists' lived experiences underscored the transformative impact of journalism on their personal and professional growth. Through ethical and competitive journalism, they developed resilience, critical thinking, and a strong commitment to truth, enhancing their role as responsible media practitioners. Institutional support was essential to sustaining their well-being and ensuring their integrity in the evolving media landscape.

Campus journalists' future self-perception was shaped by their ability to balance passion with practical career considerations, exploring diverse paths within and beyond traditional journalism. Their engagement in extracurricular and professional experiences refined their career orientation, equipping them with industry-relevant skills for evolving media landscapes. Emphasizing career flexibility and lifelong learning, their journey highlighted the need for strategic decision-making to navigate the challenges and opportunities of modern journalism. This study recommends the following:

4.1. Educational institutions can provide structured training programs, mentorship opportunities, and resources to help campus journalists balance academic and journalistic responsibilities while ensuring their well-being.

4.2. Journalism educators may integrate workshops on

ethical decision-making, censorship, and institutional constraints to equip students with the skills needed for responsible reporting.

4.3. Establishing mentorship programs with professional journalists, media practitioners, and alumni can provide campus journalists with industry insights, career guidance, and real-world exposure. Schools can foster partnerships with media organizations to offer internships, training, and networking opportunities.

4.4. Future research may explore how campus journalism influences students' career trajectories and skill development. Studies could investigate the impact of campus journalism on professional success, ethical decision-making, and adaptability in the ever-changing media industry.

4.5. Since this study focused on a specific group of campus journalists, future research may consider a broader sample across various regions and school settings. This could provide a more comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities faced by student journalists in diverse contexts.

4.6. The findings can be applied to other fields that require critical thinking, communication skills, and ethical decision-making. Public relations, marketing, and communications training programs can benefit from the holistic development approach observed in campus journalism.

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