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Article

# A New Pedagogy to Enhance the Safety and Resilience of Journalists in Dangerous Environments Globally

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**Abstract:** Risks to journalists are rising with disasters, epidemics, physical, mental and digital harassment all increasing globally. Some 1382 journalists have been killed since 1992 and 246 are imprisoned. However, the threat type has been changing, with the majority of journalists killed annually being ones working in their own country, often who are targeted for assassination. In response, UNESCO and others have called for research into best practice for safety education to halt this and the consequential decline in global media freedom. This five-year award winning project, A Holistic Humanitarian Approach to Enhance the Safety and Resilience of Journalists Globally, tested the hypothesis that a new pedagogy based on a ‘holistic humanitarian’ philosophy would be more effective in protecting journalists working in dangerous domains globally than existing provisions. The little-changed 30-year-old dominant international provision, the ‘military battlefield’ pedagogy, is used by the world’s major news organizations like BBC, CNN and the New York Times. This new pedagogy adapted and customized best practice from other professions and used Taylor’s 2020 Competencies for Disaster Healthcare professionals. A new program was devised and the two international cohorts who took it in 2018 and 2019 judged that it ‘very significantly’ enhanced their resilience and safety skills. Its concentration on group and individual physical and mental resilience building, risk mitigation, psychology, communication, self-defence, and digital security skill acquisition was a paradigm shift in training internationally for news professionals in dangerous environments. The research, thus, proved the study’s hypotheses.

**Keywords:** journalism education; simulative immersion; disaster reporting; resilience development; safety training; outdoor education; scenario-based training; war reporting; digital safety; Delphi model

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and the harassment of journalists during the various protests in 2020 has brought into focus the requirement for effective safety education and enhancement of resilience for frontline news reporters. Even before the pandemic the number of journalists being killed, injured, jailed, harassed, censored, experiencing systematic predatory attacks online, experiencing work-related stress, and otherwise being hindered from doing their work was increasing long-term globally outside of war zones [1]. The number of journalists being deliberately targeted for assassination due to their work is at an all-time high, according to Reporters Sans Frontier [1]. In terms of digital predatory behaviour towards journalists, Reporters Sans Frontier, has pointed to the use of social media by states such as India, Brazil, and Russia to insult and threaten reporters. It also reported the increase of

spyware being used by governments to infiltrate journalist's communications devices and in countries like China, Egypt, Iran, Venezuela, the blocking of their websites and messages [2].

As a consequence, freedom of the media globally, as measured by the World Press Freedom Index, is lower now than it was in 2012 [3]. Three studies by influential organizations like UNESCO, Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma New York, and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEMJE) [4–6] have identified a significant gap in safety and resilience education. UNESCO [4] called in 2015 for research on effective safety training for journalists. Since this call, there have been over 70 academic papers in the safety arena, but most are in the theoretical field. So there remained a significant gap in the literature relating to effective pedagogies for practical training in safety for journalists.

Only a minority of journalists globally require highly specialist safety training and fewer still can access it. But it can save their life or prevent them from being injured. However, to the minority of journalists internationally who did receive it, often the training was 'military battlefield style' and only partly addressed their real and evolving threats. International news organizations like Reuters, BBC, CNN, AP, and others require their staff going into hostile environments to take these courses, and it is also usually a requirement of their insurers. However, the majority of journalists killed, for example over 90% in 2015 and 2016, have been local journalists working for smaller news organizations in their own countries, rather than foreign correspondents getting caught in crossfire [1]. These now outnumber those killed in war zones. There has been little academic research published on how news organizations internally protect their journalists, particularly the smaller, less-resourced ones, where more deaths and injuries tend to arise. That, and safety leadership within newsrooms, while outside the scope of this study, are critical too in protecting journalists. This study is more limited in its scope.

The research question was thus, could a new pedagogy based on a holistic and humanitarian philosophy be developed and tested that would be more effective in protecting journalists in dangerous environments globally? These would be generally non-war zones. So, the hypothesis tested in this five-year original study was whether a new 'holistic humanitarian' philosophy and pedagogy could be developed and be effective. The new pedagogy was based on adapting pedagogies that had proved successful in other professions working in similarly dangerous environments. These were then customized to the needs of journalists. The 'holistic humanitarian' pedagogy is original, as this approach has not been used before to make journalist training more effective. Instead, commercial companies generally run by ex-military personnel have adapted military training and sold it to news organizations internationally over the past 30 years to comply with the news organization's safety duty of care. There has been little academic research as to its appropriateness or effectiveness.

The new pedagogy had to be effective in significantly enhancing the resilience and safety skills of journalists working partly or constantly in dangerous environments. It should also be applicable to those who work with them, often know as local 'fixers', translators, and others, who are often at even greater risk as locals than a fly-in and out foreign correspondent. The definition used for resilience for this research was the ability to "thrive in the face of adversity", defined by Connor and Davidson in 2003 [7].

In terms of the goal for the project, this new pedagogy had to be applicable internationally and be language, gender and culturally neutral; affordable; and customizable to relevant local threats. This is because the countries with the worst death and injury record over the past decade have very limited resources to invest in journalists' safety training. The issue has become more pertinent since the end of the Cold War, when journalists' previous status of 'neutral' observers has largely disappeared. They are increasingly deliberately targeted [8] at a level not seen before according to Reporters Sans Frontier, the international journalism group [9]. This is often by local crime gangs or sometimes the state or those close to it.

The rationale in doing the research was that the university, although in a post-conflict country, Northern Ireland, still had to prepare journalism students for threats from paramilitary groups in operation, outbreaks of riots, and dangerous crime/drug gangs often that emerged from the paramilitary

groupings. It was clear from our research partnerships that these threats were also facing journalists in other countries, such as Malawi, Russia, China, and Turkey, but there was inadequate accessible and relevant training to assist these journalists. The university had built-up significant expertise in the area in disaster healthcare and conflict studies, and also had relationships with world-class security and health and safety experts.

The main conclusion at the completion of this research was that the new pedagogy was highly effective for students from multiple countries, cultures, backgrounds, and both genders. It was tested by students undertaking difficult assignments internationally shortly after they completed it, as well as professional journalists working constantly in very dangerous environments. These findings are discussed in Sections 3 and 4 following. The results showed the new pedagogy significantly increased their resilience and safety skills. The pedagogy developed won the national UK journalism industry innovation award for 2019, from the National Council for the Training of Journalists.

### *1.1. Literature Review*

In this part of the introduction, we firstly review the literature relating to the global challenges in journalism education. In terms of journalism education globally, the seismic shifts in the profession, with changing business models, audiences and shrinking newsrooms, is causing a similar predicament for educators [10–12]. Across the world, journalism education is becoming more professionalized and has shifted into colleges and universities [12] from on the job training. However, while the Western pedagogy dominates, there is no universal curriculum and each particular country has its own models [13]. Studies of three major global journalism education centres—America, Europe, and Australia—indicate that they are all struggling to meet the strategic challenge of how to adapt to the disruptive changes the news industry faces. For example, one study found that the journalism and communication degrees at the eight highest ranked European universities in the QS World University Rankings were not ready to adapt to the recent structural changes in the profession [14]. While even in America, where journalism courses tend to be more practical, they too were struggling to keep their curriculum up to date with the rapidly changing profession [11]. It was a similar pattern in Australia [10]. With the dichotomy of the numbers studying journalism rising in places like America and traditional newsrooms shrinking, it is putting pressure on journalism educators to provide experiential learning for their students via work-integrated learning and other models [10]. Students are finding diverging careers outside traditional news rooms in broadcasting, strategic communications, public relations, social media, and other areas [15]. Only 11% of American journalism undergraduates followed the traditional news-editorial path in 2013, with the remaining 89% finding employment in other types of journalism and strategic communication fields [15].

In terms of developing new pedagogies for journalism education, Mensing argued that “educators need to be increasingly sophisticated when designing modules due to changes in how students respond to different teaching methods”. Coursework, she argued, should have opportunities for critical self-reflection and independent learning. Mensing said: “Creating flexible course units on focused topics will create a more responsive and adaptable curriculum” [11]. New socio-technical phenomena, such as big data, artificial intelligence, social media and digital audience analytics, are beginning to make a significant impact to the profession [12]. Frost [16] said: “Journalism education also needs to take more seriously the need to not just train journalism students but to give them the tools to deal with a fast-moving world where things can change almost month by month.” But rather than making a radical change, American journalism courses were adapting to this emerging reality “at the edges but lacking a strategic response to significant changes taking place in how societies and publics communicate” [11].

Given the pace of news industry change, journalism schools internationally have had to specialize, innovate and create partnerships to ensure the currency of their offering [13]. There have been innovations in both different delivery methods and specialized types of training linked to growth areas in journalism. They have ranged from very structured partnerships with BBC, Reuters Institute,

Knight Foundation, Tow Centre, and others linking with journalism schools for innovations, to more standalone projects like using massive open online courses (MOOC) to teach mobile journalism [17] in a European Commission funded project. Such partnerships are likely to be critical for the development and survival of journalism schools [11].

### 1.2. Hostile Environment Reporting Literature Review

In this next section, the literature relating to journalism and reporting in hostile environments is briefly reviewed. Globally, the number of natural disasters, epidemics, terrorist attacks, and civil disturbances are rising [6]. Some 1382 journalists have been killed since 1992, 64 are missing, and 246 are imprisoned mainly in countries like Turkey, China, Russia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Somalia, and Eritrea [1]. So, the focus of specialist safety training, particularly for journalists living constantly in a dangerous or threatening environment is often not as relevant as their circumstances demand. Most often, it is not available at all or ad hoc. The Dart Centre study showed that participants who did manage to secure it were very often not renewing their training regularly enough to keep it effective [6].

The difficulty is that the traditional pedagogy for safety training has evolved little since the first 'military battlefield-style' hostile environment training program was introduced in the United Kingdom in 1990 by AKE, a private company formed by former British special military forces personnel. However, the threats and the profession itself has changed significantly in the last 30 years due to technological, audience, and business model changes [6]. Since 1990, a number of commercial and non-profit organizations have developed to deliver these, generally, two to five day safety courses. There is no standard curriculum internationally. The desk research on the most popular 11 of these programs internationally found the majority followed a 'military battlefield' preparation model, largely aimed at the traditional foreign correspondent. Most of these courses involve preparation; mine, bomb, and weaponry awareness; gunfire familiarization; kidnap prevention; and battlefield first aid.

There were some notable exceptions that are non-commercial and follow a less military-battlefield style, like RISC, a charity that teaches freelance conflict journalists first aid, and some courses run by the ACOS Alliance internationally. The Dart Centre survey of 247 journalists globally who had undertaken at least one of these hostile environment training courses [6] recommended seven changes to their curriculum and a more gender-balanced delivery. They found that most of the training was military battlefield-orientated, but that this did not always reflect the different regional risks to journalists. They recommended more emphasis on psychological resilience, self-care, trauma awareness and best practice in collegial support. They sought more awareness from the instructors on sexual violence, harassment and cultural issues. They recommended more training on digital security, a better gender mix of trainers and more input from those with a psychology background. As cost was a major barrier to both the initial uptake and refresher training, particularly for freelancers, they recommended trying to make refresher training and courses more affordable [6]. One of the areas of main concern for journalists undertaking these programs was the kidnapping scenarios, which some felt had psychological impacts that outweighed its benefits. In addition, the Dart researchers recognized that younger journalists may not have been appropriately represented in its survey sample. This is significant, as a new so-called 'SoJobackpacker' model for foreign coverage, where people freelance for digital channels like Vice, is emerging [18].

In journalism schools globally there is also little attention to safety training, even in countries where journalists are constantly under mortal threat like Mexico, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Philippines, Columbia, and Gaza Strip. Even in the most highly resourced counties, like America, only a quarter of the 106 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication-accredited American journalism programs provided any safety training. The AEJMC report said it "left prospective journalists ill-prepared to cover domestic and international violence and disasters". The report's authors called for the development of effective curriculum and accompanying resources to address this potentially serious omission. Other experts, who advise on training in the military and medical

profession to mitigate combat post-traumatic stress disorder, also called for significantly enhanced resilience and safety training research for news professionals [5].

### 1.3. Immersive Experiential Teaching

In this final section of the literature review, we review the theoretical bases for the teaching methods chosen for the new training program. There is much evidence that scenario-based and immersive simulative training is effective for safety and resilience [19]. The idea of being “immersive” pertains to the creation of a simulated event that evokes sensory, emotional, behavioural, and conceptual engagement so that the learner has a felt experience that the event is real [20]. This level of realness, accuracy, and detail is also referred to as fidelity. Moreover it has been suggested that there are different types of fidelity, ranging from conceptual fidelity, where the scenario makes sense; physical fidelity, where the simulation duplicates the reality; and the emotional or psychological fidelity, where the learner feels it is real [21].

The other element of the new pedagogy developed was outdoor immersion. A review of outdoor learning proposed eight themes relating to the learning outcomes and psychosocial benefits [22]. These included developing outdoor living skills, dealing with risk and challenge, gaining environmental knowledge and exploring nature and wild life, sustainability issues related to the natural environment, personal growth and leadership, self-awareness, building confidence, sense of community, building connections, having fun in nature and lasting impact. The therapeutic value of wilderness as a method to improve mental health is well documented [23], as is the transformative nature of outdoor adventure education [24]. This type of learning can be described as ‘foot learning’, where students learn by walking a similar path as that walked by a journalist in a real hostile environment, but in a “safe” environment. Immersion in the wilderness environment provides additional stimuli direct from nature, such as temperature change, smells, sounds, mud and dirt, rain and wind. There are benefits to resilience-building from being in an austere wilderness environment. This in turn, theoretically, should make the individual better able to cope in dangerous situations, no matter what the environment.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This section details the methodology used for the project and qualitative and quantitative tools used to evaluate the utility of the new pedagogy by the participants. This project, A Holistic Humanitarian Approach to Enhance the Safety and Resilience of Journalists Globally, based at Ulster University, Coleraine Northern Ireland, used a three-phase design and was conducted between 2015 and 2020. Phase I, conducted by Murphy at Ulster University, was a literature review relating to pedagogies for the training of journalists for hostile environments, but also reviewed training used for antiterrorist police, military, and humanitarian workers who work in dangerous environments.

For 20 years, the University of South Wales, with various partners, including Ulster University personnel, has successfully run a master’s program for disaster healthcare professionals going into hostile environments. Best practices developed for this course also fed into the design of the new pedagogy. Separately, also at the University of South Wales, Taylor, in parallel, was working on primary research to identify non-clinical competencies for disaster healthcare professionals [24]. This research used a Modified eDelphi method to gain consensus on taxonomy of personal competencies required by professionals in a post-disaster/hostile environment. It looked at it within a spectrum of disaster severity. The eDelphi [25] method is useful for capturing informed judgment on issues that are largely unexplored, difficult to define, highly context- and expertise-specific, or future-oriented [26]. It particularly works well when the research aim is to improve the understanding, opportunities, or solutions [27] for a specific situation or issue and this was the reason it was chosen for the research.

The 11 eDelphi participants came from a range of national societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, universities in the United Kingdom and Australia, United Kingdom non-governmental organizations and the United Kingdom’s health and defence ministries. Participants had, on average, more than 20 years’ experience each working in the disaster/hostile environment field. The eDelphi

and Modified eDelphi research requires the setting of a consensus level by the researcher. Once the consensus level has been reached, then the consensus of the group is taken. This can be positive, i.e., the agreement of the proposition, or negative, i.e., the rejection of the proposition. Taylor used a modified Delphi method to gain consensus on a hierarchy of personal competencies required in hostile situations. The Modified eDelphi method is a group consensus strategy that systematically uses literature review, opinion of stakeholders and the judgment of experts within a field to reach agreement using electronic methods to correspond. This allowed for consensus on taxonomy of personal competencies required by professionals in a disaster/hostile area. This produced 39 agreed personal competencies out of 42 competency titles extracted from the literature [28]. Each competency was given a description and grouped into one of seven main categories—Personal, Safety, Communications, Field Skills, Mobility Skills, Awareness Skills and General Skills (see Appendix A for details). The key personal competencies identified were managing oneself in changing environments and personal resilience, including stress management, integrity and trust.

In terms of awareness skills, the key competencies were to develop and maintain working and professional relationships with colleagues and others. One of the most critical skills also identified was cultural awareness. This is using knowledge about gender, religious and cultural customs and practices in the host community or country to inform actions. A key new competency was to understand the humanitarian context, such as the meaning of humanity, neutrality, and use of these conventions in difficult conditions. Also, to ensure you work within legal and cultural guidelines, thereby building trust. In terms of safety, security awareness and risk assessment relating to hazards were the main ones identified. This involved being able to read and understand the situation, including reading body language of surrounding people and understanding of wider context. Other field skills identified were basic first aid, rough cooking skills, personal sanitation, water purification, sourcing safe food, using equipment such as satellite phones, identifying the minimum amount of equipment and clothing required for various climates.

Then, in Phase II at Ulster University, Murphy used semi-structured interviews as a research method to identify more newsroom-based competencies related to security, psychological, and digital safety issues of particular concern to reporters working constantly in dangerous environments. A separate cohort of ten reporters was consulted using this method. They were selected as they either worked constantly in dangerous situations or went frequently into dangerous situations. Digital and communications security, self-defence, sexual harassment, mental health and security while handling sources were the key newsroom-based competencies identified (see Appendix B).

The more journalistic desk-based security/personal resilience skills identified by Murphy's research included firstly digital skills prevention of malware, spyware, interception and protecting confidential digital files. How to deal with abuse and trolls online was also identified. Finally, dealing with physical and online sexual assault and racial attacks and harassment were identified as key competencies. These were tabulated into a further 10 competencies, bringing the total to 49 (see Appendix B for details). The competencies required, as shown by these two panels, differed significantly from the curriculum being offered by the traditional hostile environment courses taken by journalists.

The final design phase, Phase III, required a multidisciplinary range of international experts to develop new pedagogies to teach these identified 49 competencies. The training methods used and learning outcomes developed for this new program were heavily influenced by the internationally experienced panel assembled for the project. The members were researchers Deeny (disaster healthcare) and Murphy (journalism), Taylor (disaster healthcare), and Kenneth Barr and Glen Poskitt (international security consultants). Each had over 20 years of field experience in some of the most high-risk places internationally, from Afghanistan to Northern Ireland to Mexico. They were drawn from the British Red Cross, disaster healthcare nursing, former Royal Ulster Constabulary/Police Service of Northern Ireland anti-terrorist officers, journalism and military training.

The program developed to teach the 49 identified competencies was an intensive six day resilience and safety course that was a multidisciplinary and multiagency event. The first cohort, in September

2018, had young journalists from three countries, of mixed genders, and English was not the first language of them all. These international journalism masters' students at Ulster University setup a camp at an isolated forest at the edge of the Coleraine campus in Northern Ireland as a simulated refugee camp. From purposely limited equipment of tarpaulins and ropes, they were taught shelter building, bush craft, water purification, how to manage personal nutrition, light fires, cook outdoors and other critical survival skills. This exercise also rapidly developed teamwork in the cohort who had not met before and leadership skills, as well as building personal resilience.

Instruction and exercises were undertaken on managing personal health issues associated with energy levels, dealing with sleep deprivation, temperature control, reproductive health and infection control. A combination of "pre-briefs", "hot debriefs", and "reflective discussions" occurred each day. Throughout the simulation, the lecturers and or experts either took roles in the scenario (teacher in role) or observed. The "teacher in role" approach is similar to that advocated by Dorothy Heathcote [28], but does not extend to the "Mantle of the Expert" approach she advocated. It does mean, however, that teachers can provide expert feedback from within the scenario.

In the health-related scenarios, such as mass casualty events, incidents from Northern Ireland informed the design, e.g., a punishment shooting by a dissident paramilitary group. Such local examples are valuable to include because it is possible to draw in expertise, such as the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the ambulance service. Some dramaturgical methods drawn from actor training that are used in nursing education [29] were used to enhance the quality of casualty acting by nursing students who performed the roles in the mass casualty events.

Significant new learning techniques were developed on emergency mental health first aid and identifying and dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, all aimed at enhancing personal resilience. A key part of this was the reflective discussion that occurred at the end of each day after everyone had had a meal around the camp fire. This event was chaired by one of the lecturers and involved the use of a "talking stick" that had an audio-recorder strapped to it. The objective of this approach was threefold. Firstly, to give students insight into organized community discussion (talking stick), an opportunity for everyone to express feelings about learning during the day and to create a record for future analysis. The second part of the 2018 cohort's program was an intensive security training course. It used police training methodology of intensive role play exercises. It developed much of the skills and knowledge identified in Appendix B.

The new program's next cohort, in September 2019, benefitted from several adjustments to the pedagogy and an increase in the psychology and self-defence element based on feedback from the first cohort. The 2019 cohort was brought on a tour in Derry city to a contested part of the city near the area where a journalist had been assassinated by the Real IRA the previous April during a riot. The tour was guided by a man whose innocent father had been shoot dead in 'Bloody Sunday' by British soldiers. This was to improve learning, empathy, and cultural understanding. A river-based scenario was added too, based around covering illegal immigrants trying to land in Europe. To enhance first aid training, the CitizenAID system, which has an app and wallet-sized instruction card, was used to give an 'in course' qualification.

This 2019 cohort included journalists who were working constantly in dangerous environments. There were 10 other masters' students of both sexes, different nationalities, languages from a variety of backgrounds, and with differing professional experience. The working journalists were much more specific in what they wanted to learn and demanding of trainers. It was useful to test the pedagogy on different populations of journalists to feed into the results. The results were measured by both quantitative and qualitative methods. The unit of analysis was the new 'holistic humanitarian' pedagogy and the perception of the master's students and working journalists of its utility to them. In terms of quantitative results, the 2018 student cohort completed the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale 25 [7] before starting the program. The students were asked 25 questions about their resilience and scored them between one to four each. So, the maximum was 100 on the Connor–Davidson scale. The scale was developed specifically from Connor and Davidson's treatment of people with

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), so had a clear relevance to this study. This study involved the participants evaluating the effectiveness of the new pedagogy rather than rating their own performance. The less experienced group members initially scored around 61 on the scale, with the more experienced ones around 83 [8]. To put this in perspective, the American population average was 80.4, with a standard deviation of 12.8. It was significantly above the Hong Kong general population level of 60 (13.9 standard deviation) [8]. The 2018 cohort re-marked themselves against the Connor–Davidson scale six weeks after completion of the course. They all reported that their scores had risen significantly. The greatest rise was in the students who had started with the lower scores—now up around 83. Those more experienced rose from the 80s to the 90s on the CD-RISC25 scale. This coupled with the three other pieces of measurable feedback, which indicated that the program did have a significant impact on building the resilience levels of participants.

There was a second quantitative method used to gather results from the 2018 cohort. This was a questionnaire on their skill and knowledge level relating to safety. This was completed before the program started and again after the final day. The results showed that the program has achieved its main learning objective in terms of specialist safety skills and knowledge acquisition, with up to 83% improvement on their knowledge in this area. A male student in the 2018 cohort said: “Going back to the self-assessment forms following the training, I was able to see a marked improvement in all areas. As well as highlighting the paramount importance of detailed knowledge and preparedness, I now feel confident, and excited, to begin a career working in harsh and hostile environments.” Another female student reflected: “Risk, will always be there, but now I have the tools to cope with it and prepare for it.”

Instead of being paralyzed with fear about doing something, the student reflected that the course had taught her to equip herself with the tools to mitigate the risk. In terms of qualitative feedback, the first method used was the recording each evening around the campfire of a group discussion. They found it comforting that they were all experiencing some form of stress and anxiety and this generally rose and eased at the same time based around the simulation exercises. They had learnt ways to deal with it. The penultimate qualitative feedback for their first cohort was a reflective blog, with prompts that they completed six weeks after completing the training. This was to assess how much the training had impacted on their daily lives. In overall terms, the 2018 cohort reported that their resilience and safety awareness had hugely improved. The final qualitative evaluation of the 2018 cohort was that 20% of their journalistic assignment marks for the remainder of the semester were allocated for how they implemented safety protocols. This was a novel departure for journalism assessment, but was highly effective in reinforcing the safety and resilience competencies.

The real test of the growing resilience for the 2018 group was when storm Ali knocked down part of their forest shelter at 5am in the morning. While initially the reaction of them all was to abandon the forest for the back-up accommodation on campus, they collectively decided to rebuild it. One student said: “My first idea when the shelter fell apart was to give up and head to our alternative accommodation, but when we started fixing it I was very glad we didn’t. After the experience, I do feel more confident that my physical resilience has increased.” Another male said this was the real moment where they felt their enhanced resilience from the previous few days’ training was demonstrated. The view was echoed by others in the group.

One female participant said: “Having a role in a team and trusting your colleagues in a hostile situation are essential, and we got that right pretty quickly.” The other element that they took away was the importance of situational awareness and dynamic risk assessment. A student said: “It is a necessity while on the field to absorb your surroundings in a way which allows you to operate safely. I found myself in the days after the week-long program applying situational awareness in crowds. While I feel more situational aware than when I began, this still requires continuous maintenance and revisiting but it is a priceless process.”

In terms of learning to deal with aggressive behaviour by security forces, they found the exercises in this area very useful. A male participant said: “The key lessons from this exercise were to remain

compliant and to appear as not posing a threat.” The importance of cultural awareness was drilled into the students and illustrated by real life examples from instructors who had served in critical roles in hostile environments: “You’re expected to drink at least three cups of tea. The strict drinking of tea relates specifically to the correct etiquette you’d want to adhere to when attending a meeting of Afghan village elders”. But the students understood the message and one reflected: “Perhaps not the most life-saving kernel of advice. But the example highlights the real importance and level of detail that’s needed when preparing to report abroad from different cultures and societies.”

Another key element of the program was developing ways to protect your mental health and that of those around you. The students found the most effective message came from someone with credibility. The strategy advised by the battlefield nurse suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder was to have a friend or family member who you could confide in act as an anchor, which was great advice. A student remarked: “How those around him, including his partner, noticed the tell-tale signs before he did. And, in order to move forward, how he had to go back to the times he was in Syria, Iraq or South Sudan. His candidness was jarring. It was one of the most enlightening parts of the course. How to deal mentally with things in the field, and later, once it is over, how you must process it. This helped me understand the psychological realities of warfare firsthand.” There was a similar reaction by all the other students in the first cohort. Another female student said it made her realize that she did not have such an anchor, but she must develop one.

In terms of the other lessons taken away in mental health, several students reflected that speaking with the team and colleagues honestly about things had assisted their mental resilience. It showed how appropriate training and knowledge could really lessen trauma in high stress situations. A male participant said: “I was very impressed with the week’s activities. I feel more resilient after the week but also feel a need to keep revisiting my own mental resilience. The knowledge gained is invaluable. I am without doubt much better equipped to enter into a hostile environment than when I began the week.”

In terms of source protection and personal security, they all learnt valuable lessons though several live exercises, including one where they were “stabbed” by a source as they did not take enough precautions. A student reflected how this left a significant impression on her: “If you’re meeting a source, you should plan your route, how are you going to communicate with them, and assess the person’s behaviour and intentions. Plan, plan and then plan again.”

To practice their basic their first aid training, communication, and teamwork skills, the students in both cohorts had to come onto the scene of a mass casualty with bloodied actors. They had to act as first responders before doing a ‘handover’ to real paramedics and police. They all reported to being hugely apprehensive before the event. However, they had learnt from the course that instead of worrying they should plan and develop their information. One female student said that in the hours before the exercise, instead of worrying she employed a new strategy: “I asked all the questions I had in my head. I felt that gaining as much knowledge as I could in those hours instead of simply worry about it worked miracles. But, once we the exercise commenced I felt an adrenaline rush and I got into it without thinking twice.”

For the 2019 cohort, a different evaluation method was used to add depth and texture to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the new pedagogy. Qualitative recorded video interviews were conducted independent of the teaching team in a professional TV studio near the forest when the course was completed. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured list of open ended questions, largely adapted from the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale 25 [9]. The interviewees were asked to rank both their safety (a) and resilience (b) skills before and after the program and provide an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the pedagogy (c). These interviews were then analysed and findings categorised. The participants (n = 12) broke down into three broad categories. The first 58% (n = 7) indicated significant learning in (a), (b), and (c), with extremely high satisfaction that their confidence level to meet future challenges was hugely enhanced.

### 3. Results

There was no gender bias in the results, but there was one towards participants from Africa, Scandinavia, and Canada, who tended to have more outdoor adventure experience, including some in hostile environments. The mid-satisfied category, 25% (n = 3), had found the program initially way beyond their comfort zone, but in (a), (b), and (c) evaluated it as great learning and significantly confidence building. They felt they also knew what further skills they needed to acquire before working in a hostile environment and were beginning to plan to acquire them. The third category 17% (n = 2) had found the experience totally outside their comfort zone, but nonetheless rated their learning in (a), (b), and (c) as very good. Due to tiredness and other factors, they had not partaken in all the exercises. They had little outdoor experience as they were suburban UK and Chinese city-based and the course had led them to question their suitability for working in dangerous environments. They all commented on the camaraderie they had built and informal learning and mental health support from each other, which helped them through the program.

Significantly, several of the participants in the 2019 cohort had had 'military battlefield' style training previously. They all said that this new program was more effective for them as it better addressed their real safety issues. While the sample size was small, so it is not possible to generalize to the entire population, the indication would be that the new pedagogy is gender, language, and nationality neutral. The most important indicator of effective learning was that it led the journalism trainees to successfully undertake assignments in Syrian refugee camps, under fire in Gaza, and covering illegal immigrants in the Mediterranean. Several of the journalistic outputs that resulted were shortlisted for UK national student journalism awards. The experimental conclusions that can be drawn are that the pedagogy developed to build resilience and safety skills to prepare journalists for hostile environments is effective in its principle aims.

### 4. Discussion

In terms of interpreting the results, it was clearly demonstrated that a holistic humanitarian approach to resilience training was highly effective. It ensured transmission of skills and knowledge to keep the trainees safe and give them a strong basis to build their resilience and their journalistic ambitions. With further refinement and testing on a larger cohort, it provides a strong basis for developing a new curriculum that can be rolled out and delivered both to industry and in journalism trainee programs cost effectively.

In terms of its applicability internationally, the new pedagogy was effective for both genders, participants from over nine countries, and four different first languages, as well as for both highly experienced and novice journalists. The equipment capital costs were less than \$1,000. The curriculum, teaching plans and teaching materials developed in the two cohorts can be made available to other training providers.

The limitations of the project were the numbers who participated in the two cohorts, which meant ethically we could not collate individual data on the DC\_RISC25 resilience scale. However, the information, in general terms, was collected. The research team is in contact with the two cohorts, but it would have been beneficial to assess their skills and knowledge retention one, two, and three years on from the initial course. This would allow the research team assess its relevance to their work and further refine the new pedagogy.

While journalism education worldwide is in a state of catch-up with a news industry that is also in such a transient phase, safety can be pushed down the agenda. However, as we have seen from the alarming statistics from UNESCO, Reporter's San Frontier, and the Committee to Protect Journalists, in an increasing number of countries journalists' lives are in mortal danger due to what they publish. Journalism education worldwide has a shared occupational hazard that can be partly reduced by effective training. Other factors, usually outside the media's control, are also critical to improve safety. This study suggests a proven curriculum for a program that can be customized to local risks and be delivered cost-effectively by indigenous trainers. Given the increasing squeeze on

resources in news operations internationally, it is likely that more of this safety and resilience training will fall on universities and colleges in the future. So, the findings of this innovative project should be of interest to journalism educators. The new pedagogy also proves the utility of adapting proven teaching techniques from other professions who also operate in dangerous environments but who generally suffer fewer casualties than those working in a journalism context. In many cases, their fewer casualties maybe due to more relevant and effective training they receive.

## 5. Conclusions

To conclude, a more standardized safety culture in newsrooms globally and for freelancers benefits everyone, particularly those working on dangerous beats or in countries with constant danger. It also benefits people caught-up in trauma, as there is evidence that misjudged journalism can augment their suffering, while good empathetic journalism can help with the healing process. One of the best ways to respond to the inherent and growing risk in newsgathering is to follow the lead of other professions, like the medical field, police and military. That is, to properly train the news gathering team about the potential impact of trauma and how to operate safely. But while training individual journalists effectively is part of the solution, there is evidence from Southwick [30] and others that effective safety leadership in news organizations is critical too. Southwick said that despite the mental health dangers: “There are very few newsrooms that conduct tabletop, decision-making exercises for reporters facing dangerous assignments or journalism schools that teach resilience training” [7]. This training, he said, has been shown to significantly reduce post-traumatic stress disorder in organizations.

In terms of future research, given the importance of newsroom leadership to safety and resilience, it would be useful to have more knowledge of best practice in this area. Most news organizations globally are struggling with the global economic downturn, an accelerating changing business model and audience change. But a new culture of wellbeing and safety training may be one of the few benefits the COVID-19 pandemic brings to news organizations internationally. Finally, unless authorities combat the impunity for those who attack journalists, the next decade could be even more dangerous for the news professionals no matter what improvements are made to training.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Taylor Disaster Healthcare Worker Personal Non-Clinical Competency Framework.

Competency Group	Competency Title	Competency Description
<b>Personal</b>	1. Adaptability	Undertake different roles and responsibilities
	2. Managing self in changing environments	Be effective in working environments that change rapidly, including changeable climates
	3. Personal resilience including stress management	Cope with difficult and stressful situations or experiences
	4. Leadership	Take charge when required, set a good example of how to do things, support colleagues to achieve mission goals
	5. Integrity and trust	To work within legal and cultural guidelines, thereby building trust with client groups and colleagues
	6. Decision-making	Assess a situation, determine a course of action, and follow through and carry out a course of action
<b>Safety</b>	7. Security awareness	Assess a situation and identify potential threats or risks to personal safety and the safety of others
	8. Risk assessment	Identify hazards, evaluate risks, and identify mitigation or control measures to reduce the impact of relevant risks
	9. Mine awareness	Understand the appropriate action to take when faced with mines, minefields, unexploded ordnance, and improvised explosive devices when deployed to a conflict or post-conflict disaster area
	10. Reacting to bomb and other threats	Take appropriate action in relation to bomb threat and other security threats that may endanger life
	11. Managing environmental threats	Take appropriate action when faced with different climates, topography, and associated flora and fauna
	12. Basic first aid	Administer basic first aid using proprietary and improvised first aid supplies
	13. Safe working	Work in a way that does not endanger self or others in the same area
<b>Communications</b>	14. Use of interpreters	Communicate with others using a 3rd person when you do not speak the same language
	15. Use of radios	Communicate using different types of radios and antennae, use radio protocols and voice procedures correctly
	16. Use of computers	Communicate using common software packages including word processing, spreadsheets, and email
	17. Use of satellite phones	Communicate using satellite phones
<b>Field Skills</b>	18. Personal water purification	Purify drinking water at an individual level
	19. Personal sanitation	Construct working simple toilets and washing facilities
	20. Sourcing of Safe Food	Select and source safe food from the supplies available
	21. Rough camping skills Including shelter building	Select and set up tents in rough camping site; build improvised shelters if tents not available

Table A1. Cont.

Competency Group	Competency Title	Competency Description
	22. Fire lighting including firewood selection	Select and use suitable materials to start and maintain a fire for heating and cooking
	23. Rough cooking skills	Cook safely and effectively on open fires and use improvised cooking equipment where appropriate
	24. Driving skills	Drive various types of vehicles, including towing trailers on and off road; carry out basic vehicle maintenance (changing a wheel, oil, fuel and brake checks), fitting snow chains, and self-recovery
	25. Movement through dangerous terrain	Move through dangerous locations either on foot or in a vehicle safely
	26. Navigation	Navigate using map and compass, handheld global positioning systems
	27. Ground and route estimation	Assess the ground and terrain using maps, photos, and own visual assessments to identify safe routes
<b>Awareness Skills</b>	28. Interpersonal skills	Develop and maintain working and professional relationships with colleagues and others
	29. Cultural awareness	Use knowledge about gender, religious, and cultural customs and practices in the host community/country to inform actions
	30. Situational awareness	Read and understand the current situation of the disaster—includes reading body language of surrounding people and understanding of wider context of the disaster response
	31. Understanding the humanitarian context	Awareness of the meaning of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality and the implications of these conventions when working in a disaster context
<b>General Skills</b>	32. Problem solving	Consider a problem situation or issue and generate possible solutions
	33. Ability to cope with responsibility	Undertake a task or position of responsibility and see it through to completion
	34. Time management	Manage and prioritize tasks within a set time frame.
	35. Planning skills	Identify and prioritize the objectives, funding, equipment, skills, and personnel, required to complete a large task; make the necessary arrangements to complete the task
	36. Strategic thinking	Identify what is to be achieved overall and when constituent parts must be in place to achieve the goal
	37. Management skills	Co-ordinate a team and manage their outputs with reference to project goals
	38. Ability to select suitable personal equipment	Select the right equipment and clothing for a specific disaster response, identify minimum amount of equipment and clothing needed, and identify appropriate multifunctional equipment
	39. Negotiation skills	Negotiate with 3rd parties to achieve a required end-state e.g., with suppliers, government officials (immigration, customs), tribal leaders/ village elders, etc.

## Appendix B

**Table A2.** Competencies from interviews with journalists in constant hostile environments.

Competency Group	Competency Title	Competency Description
	40. Malware attacks	Prevention of malware attacks
	41. Online harassment	Strategies to cope with abuse and trolls online via social media
	42. Distressing content	Cope with difficult and stressful digital content
	43. Cyber-security	Knowledge to avoid viruses, malware, and interception
	44. Digital confidentiality	Protection of confidential digital material from hackers and the state
	45. Theft prevention	Prevention of theft of physical equipment
	46. Physical/online sexual assault	Avoidance of unwarranted attention and attack of a sexual nature
	47. Self-defence	Self-defence skills to avoid physical attack
	48. Official harassment	Effective strategies for dealing with threats from state actors
	49. Racial attacks	Coping strategies for racial attacks—physical or online

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