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Angel Christin E. Ped & Bryan R. Realgo

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Adaptiveness and empowerment of campus journalists: The Philippine experience

Angel Christin E. Ped^{1*} and Bryan R. Realgo² 

^{1,2} Department of Communication, College of Arts and Sciences, Mariano Marcos State University,
Email: angelped1993@gmail.com

* Corresponding author

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Abstract: Campus journalism serves as an essential platform for the student body, amplifying their concerns, aspirations, and perspectives. This qualitative study explored the practices and achievements of campus journalists, recognizing their role as pivotal conduits for student expression and coverage of campus issues. Through semi-structured interviews with six campus journalists at Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) in the Philippines, including the student publication, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), and the College of Teacher Education (CTE), participants were selected using inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data were collected from July to September 2023 and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The study uncovered two overarching themes. The first research objective revealed three sub-themes: multi-sourcing, exploration, and engagement, which together form the grand theme of the Adaptiveness of Campus Journalists. These findings reflect the dynamic nature of campus journalists, emphasizing that they are active contributors to their campus. The second research objective uncovers three sub-themes: winning competitions, agenda-setting, and personal satisfaction, leading to the grand theme of Campus Journalism as Empowerment. These themes highlight the achievements of campus journalists in competitive areas, their impact, and the personal fulfillment of their practices. The findings of this study underscore the adaptive and empowering nature of campus journalism, reflecting its significant impact on both the journalists and the publications they serve.

INTRODUCTION

Campus journalism has long served as a vital platform for student expression, information dissemination, and critical engagement within educational institutions (Carlobos & Callo, 2025; Connor & Connor, 2025). In the Philippines, its roots can be traced to early student publications that emerged during the Spanish and American colonial periods, where writing became a means of resistance and social critique (Arao, 2013). Over time, campus journalism evolved into an institutionalized practice supported by policies such as Republic Act No. 7029, or the Campus Journalism Act of 1991, which upholds student press freedom and reinforces the role of student publications in promoting democratic participation and accountability.

Within contemporary educational settings, campus journalism functions not only as a medium for reporting but also as a space for dialogue, critical thinking, and civic engagement (Aiston, 2025; Lövhelm, 2024). Student publications enable discussions on both campus-based and societal issues, contributing to the formation of informed and active communities (Bilinovich, 2022; Camposano, 2021). At the same time, campus journalism serves as a training ground for aspiring media practitioners, allowing students to develop essential journalistic skills such as writing, sourcing, and fact-checking (BLEPT, 2015). With the rise of digital media, campus journalism has further expanded its reach and adapted to new forms of communication, enabling more immediate and interactive engagement with audiences while responding to the challenges of misinformation and declining trust in mainstream media (Chan et al., 2019; Shao, 2020).

Despite its significance, campus journalism continues to face various challenges, including institutional constraints, limited resources, and issues related to press freedom (Tomacruz, 2018). Student journalists often navigate complex power dynamics, particularly when reporting on issues involving their own institutions, which may affect their ability to practice journalism freely (O'Sullivan & Abdul-Hafeez, 2022). Moreover, while campus journalism is frequently associated with competitions and recognition, scholars have noted that an overemphasis on awards may shift focus away from its core values of truth-seeking and public service (Punzalan, 2020). At the same time, campus journalists are also driven by motivations such as advocacy, personal growth, and the desire to contribute to meaningful discourse (Carbonilla, 2021).

Existing studies have examined the roles, challenges, and functions of campus journalism (Aiston, 2025; Connor & Connor, 2025; Lövhelm, 2024); however, much of the literature addresses these aspects in isolation. There remains limited research on how campus journalists simultaneously enact their practices and translate them into both tangible and intangible achievements within a localized university context. This gap highlights the need to examine campus journalism not only in terms of what student journalists do, but also what they gain and how these experiences shape their development and contributions. This study addresses this gap by offering an integrated analysis of the practices and achievements of campus journalists in a state university in the Philippines, highlighting how their day-to-day journalistic functions contribute to both professional outcomes and personal development.

Grounded in this perspective, the present study draws on broader concepts in journalism and communication, particularly those related to journalistic practice, professional socialization, and media influence, to examine how campus journalists enact their roles within institutional settings. It is guided by the assumption that campus journalism functions not merely as a preparatory activity but as an active site where journalistic norms, identities, and forms of engagement are continuously developed and negotiated.

Thus, this study aims to explore the practices of campus journalists in performing their functions and to examine the achievements they attain through their practice. By providing an integrated analysis of both practices and outcomes, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of campus journalism as both a developmental and participatory process.

The novelty of this research lies in its dual focus on practices and achievements, as well as its emphasis on their interrelationship within a specific institutional context. By linking what campus journalists do with what they achieve, the study moves beyond fragmented perspectives and contributes to a more holistic understanding of campus journalism. In doing so, it provides empirical insights that can inform journalism education, student publication policies, and future research on student media in the Philippine context.

METHODS

The research used a qualitative approach to provide a deeper understanding of campus journalists' practices. According to Pathak et al. (2018), the qualitative approach comprehends an individual's beliefs, experiences, attitudes,

behavior, and interactions. It does not generate numerical data; instead, it produces non-numerical data. Rather than focusing on cause and effect, qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning, perspectives, and motivations behind a phenomenon, such as campus journalism.

Guided by the study's objectives, the research explored campus journalists' practices in performing their functions and the achievements they attain in their journalistic work. To address these aims, a purposive sampling strategy was employed in selecting participants. In qualitative research, participant selection is based on participants' capacity to provide relevant, information-rich insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Sargeant, 2012).

A total of six participants were included in the study, all of whom were current campus journalists at Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU). The participants were selected based on specific criteria: they were actively involved in campus journalism, had at least two years of experience, and held positions within the editorial board of their respective student publications. These criteria ensure that the participants possessed sufficient experience and engagement to meaningfully contribute to the study.

The participants comprised six campus journalists from three publications at the university. Participants 1 and 2 were both from *Sirmata*, the official publication of Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) college students. Participants 3 and 4 were both from *The Edge*, the official student publication of the MMSU College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). Lastly, Participants 5 and 6 were both from *CTE Bulletin*, the official student publication of MMSU College of Teacher Education

(CTE). Participants who did not meet the specified criteria were excluded from the study to ensure the consistency and relevance of the collected data. To maintain confidentiality and protect participants'

identities, nicknames were used throughout the study, as shown in table 1. All procedures conducted in the study were approved by the University Research Ethics Review Board (URERB).

Table 1.
Participants' Nicknames

Participant	Publication	Number of years In the Publication	Nicknames	Position
1	Sirmata	4	Campus Journalist I	Managing Editor
2	Sirmata	3	Campus Journalist R	Associate Editor
3	The Edge	2	Campus Journalist E	Editor-in-Chief
4	The Edge	3	Campus Journalist J	Associate Editor
5	CTE Bulletin	3	Campus Journalist W	Editor-in-Chief
6	CTE Bulletin	2	Campus Journalist G	Circulation Manager

Source: Research data

The primary data-gathering procedure was semi-structured interviews conducted from July to September 2023, which were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The interview was semi-structured, allowing participants the freedom to answer and giving the researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and seek clarification. A semi-structured interview is often described as a "conversation with a purpose" (Barclay, 2018), provides depth and flexibility by allowing participants to elaborate on their responses (George, 2022). It helps researchers gather information that cannot be effectively observed and offers insights into participants' experiences and knowledge (Ferruci, 2015).

In that sense, semi-structured interviews, recognized for their capacity to delve deeper due to their flexibility, facilitate a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and narratives, offering researchers

insights into phenomena that might otherwise remain elusive. During the interview, the participants were asked questions that led to descriptions of their practices and achievements.

The recorded interview was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to address the research problems. Thematic analysis, as noted by Kiger and Varpio (2020), is effective for analyzing a dataset to understand experiences, thoughts, or behaviors. Braun and Clarke (2006) also highlight its versatility as a standalone qualitative method. The process involved familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, identifying broader themes, refining these themes for clarity and accuracy, and presenting findings supported by relevant quotes and examples.

Following the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, the study findings were shared with participants for

member checking, enabling them to review their responses and assess the credibility of the data. Member checking in qualitative research involves participants checking their data to ensure accuracy and plausibility.

This qualitative study is inductive and is drawn from the socio-cultural tradition of communication theory. According to Craig (1999), the socio-cultural tradition sees communication as a symbolic process in the reproduction or production of social order. It is all about context, culture, and social practices, such as campus journalism. Chang'orok (2017) added that this tradition holds that reality is not an objective set of arrangements outside but is constructed through communicating in groups, society, and cultures, such as campus journalists. Furthermore, Goddard and Melville (2004) explained that inductive research starts with observations, and theories are proposed towards the end of the research process based on those observations. Moreover, Bernard (2011) indicates that inductive research involves searching for patterns from observation and developing explanations – theories – for those patterns, such as practices. This study focused on the practices and achievements of campus journalists. Hence, this theorizing contributed additional knowledge and did not test existing communication and social sciences theories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study's thematic analysis of the participants' responses. Guided by two the research questions, namely what are the practices of campus journalists in performing their functions?; and what are the achievements of campus journalists in their practice? The results are organized

into themes that reflect the lived experiences of campus journalists. The findings of this research are divided into two major categories corresponding to the research objectives. First, practices of campus journalists. Second, achievements of campus journalists. Each category is further discussed through emerging themes derived from the data, supported by participant and relevant literature.

To contextualize the findings of this study, it is important to situate campus journalism within its broader historical and institutional landscape in the Philippines. Campus journalism in the Philippines has a long history rooted in the country's sociopolitical struggles. Student publications emerged during the Spanish and American colonial periods, when writing became a means of resistance and expression, as in the works of reformists such as Marcelo H. del Pilar, Graciano López Jaena, and José Rizal. Early student publications helped expose social issues and critique colonial governance (Arao, 2013). Over time, it has evolved into an institutionalized practice supported by policies such as the Republic Act. No. 7079, which upholds student press freedom, and organizations like the College Editors Guild of the Philippines. Despite periods of repression, campus journalism has persisted as a space for democratic participation and institutional accountability (Gavilan, 2018). In the contemporary media environment, it continues to adapt to digital platforms while maintaining its role in shaping campus discourse. This section integrates participants' narratives, interpretations, and existing scholarship to provide a comprehensive understanding of campus journalism practices and their outcomes.

Practices of Campus Journalists in Performing Their Function

Multi-sourcing. Thematic analysis revealed that multi-sourcing is a central practice among campus journalists in fulfilling their journalistic responsibilities. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of consulting multiple sources in gathering and verifying information.

Campus Journalist W emphasized the necessity of using primary, secondary, and tertiary sources to craft a well-informed article, highlighting primary sources as those who directly witnessed events and secondary sources as those who contributed to the narrative.

We need primary, secondary, and tertiary sources; if we use these three core sources to get information, we can come up with a good article. So, in primary sources, it's the one who sees and experiences the event, and in secondary sources, others who can also contribute to the article. We need to publish (September 15, 2023).

Conversely, Campus Journalist E stressed the importance of verification, suggesting consulting eyewitnesses, experts, and other relevant individuals to corroborate information for a more reliable understanding, ultimately aiming for 99% certainty about the truth.

We are not just confined to one source, but we must verify it, especially in a situation where we must ask and verify that information. First, to primary resources who are present in that situation, to eyewitnesses, and second to experts or professionals, and then number three, to related people to that situation, and if they tell similar stories or similar information,

then we assume that is the 99% truth (September 21, 2023).

The campus journalists collectively emphasized the significance of gathering information from various sources, including the use of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, to ensure a thorough exploration of a topic. Campus Journalist said:

I also emphasized the significance of credible sources, suggesting that information be cross-verified with at least two different sources, which enhances the reliability of the data obtained from the primary source.

The insights derived from participants' responses constitute significant contributions to understanding their methods of information gathering and verification, particularly in the context of publishing content in student publications. The data demonstrated a discerning approach among the participants, wherein a singular source of information is not the exclusive reliance. Rather, the participants engaged proactively with a diverse array of sources, underscoring their commitment to meticulous scrutiny and comprehensive verification to uphold the standards of accuracy and reliability in their published work.

In relation to this, Curtis (2011) stated that whether delving into the complexities of hard news or exploring the nuances of soft news, journalists are required to diligently gather and analyze information as a fundamental step in their writing process, and this includes three tools in gathering and verifying information. This finding aligns with studies on campus journalism, particularly the work of Tasmim and Atikuzzaman (2026), which highlight that campus

journalists rely on diverse information sources to strengthen the reliability of their reporting. This suggests that multi-sourcing is not only a professional expectation but also a practiced skill among student journalists.

This practice also reflects the fundamental role of campus journalism as a platform for information dissemination and critical discourse (Billinovich, 2022). The emphasis on verification and multiple sourcing demonstrates how campus journalists uphold standards similar to those of professional journalism, reinforcing their role not only as student writers but also as contributors to informed campus dialogue.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding can be understood in relation to journalistic norms of verification and sourcing, which are traditionally framed as professional standards acquired through formal training and newsroom experience. However, the present study challenges this assumption by demonstrating that such norms are already actively practiced within campus journalism contexts. This suggests that professional socialization in journalism may begin earlier than previously emphasized in existing frameworks. Rather than functioning solely as preparatory spaces, campus publications operate as sites where journalistic norms are enacted, negotiated, and internalized in practice. This finding, therefore, refines existing perspectives by repositioning campus journalism not merely as a training ground, but as an active locus of professional norm formation.

Exploratory. In writing news articles, participants emphasized incorporating their unique stylistic approaches, thereby making their writing exploratory in nature. The participants expressed that they employ a distinctive

style, contributing to the individuality and originality of their storytelling.

Campus Journalist R gives himself at least a day to write a full news article, reflecting on his past reliance on internet searches for similar articles, but now opts to write the headline first, emphasizing the interconnectedness between the headline and lead.

I give myself at least a day to write a full news article and before, I would search similar articles to what I was writing on the Internet and pattern that to my current draft and it made my job easier but I realized that I cannot rely on the Internet every time and so when I developed quite an improvement, tatta I usually write the headline first and some of the writers are quite shocked that I do that kasi the general rule is you have to write your lead first for you to be able to formulate your headline but siak met, it's the other way around (July 21, 2023).

Conversely, Campus Journalist I focuses on extensive research before execution, stressing the importance of factual grounding in opinion articles, ensuring opinions are based on facts as a principle of journalistic integrity.

Pre-writing, rewriting, and post-writing, this includes editing, revising, verifying the facts but for example, an opinion article, I have to make sure that my opinion is on point and not as if I'm opining on a certain aspect of that story, instead, I should know the gist. I should know what is being debated about and take a stand, and I have to make sure that my stand is grounded on facts. You can build opinions not based on facts, but being a

journalist, or campus journalist, it should be based on facts (July 24, 2023).

The participants bring a distinctive approach to the writing process, showcasing unique approaches to varied writing styles. They reject established styles, especially if deemed “*gasgas*”. Their perspectives form a cohesive narrative, offering a comprehensive view of the various techniques embraced by campus journalists.

The data gathered from the interviews indicates that a significant majority of participants, when crafting their narratives, diverge from conventional writing norms. Instead, they have embraced a personalized approach to writing, thereby fostering an exploratory method in crafting their articles. This departure from traditional writing styles underscores the dynamic and individualistic nature of their storytelling, reflecting a trend towards innovative and distinct modes of expression in campus journalists' writing.

The finding also reflects the evolving nature of campus journalism in the digital and contemporary media landscape, where flexibility in storytelling and adaptation to new formats are increasingly necessary (Shao, 2020). The participants' tendency to experiment with writing styles suggests that campus journalists not only follow traditional norms but are actively shaping new forms of journalistic expression.

In correspondence, Carnegie-Knight, as cited by Broaddus (2012), students find themselves in a dynamic landscape, grappling with the ever-changing environment of journalism. While some stick to old-fashioned newspaper training, others embrace a transformative approach. This also aligns

with Alaqabawy (2025), who noted that student-run media environments encourage experimentation and the development of journalistic identity.

While traditional journalism frameworks emphasize adherence to established writing conventions, the findings of this study suggest that campus journalists actively deviate from and reconstruct these norms in practice. This indicates that journalistic practice, particularly in student contexts, is not purely rule-bound but interpretive and evolving. The study, therefore, contributes to theory by highlighting the role of agency among emerging journalists, suggesting that journalistic norms are not only transmitted but also reshaped through practice, especially within flexible and less institutionalized environments such as campus media.

Engagement. The results revealed that the activities undertaken by campus journalists extend beyond their journalistic work for it encompasses active involvement with the administrative aspects of their educational institutions. In addition to their primary role of disseminating information, these journalists actively engaged in liaising with the administrative authorities and managing the necessary paperwork essential for the smooth functioning and publication of their journalistic endeavors. Participants in the study further highlighted the multifaceted nature of their responsibilities in this regard.

Campus Journalist R, as the Managing Editor, is tasked with processing papers and coordinating with the administration regarding budget, procurement, honoraria, and related matters. R said:

I was put as the Managing Editor, the primary responsibility of a Managing Editor is to process papers and coordinate with the administration regarding budget, procurement, honoraria, and those correlated with it. (July 21, 2023)

Meanwhile Campus Journalist I's responsibilities include processing paperwork for the publication, assisting the EIC, and submitting letters to university authorities. I said:

My role as a Managing Editor is to process paperwork for the publication and to assist the EIC. I have a job to process papers or submit letters to certain authorities in the university (July 24, 2023).

One of the key responsibilities undertaken by the Editorial Board involves the cultivation of various communication channels with both internal university stakeholders and external authorities or entities. This multifaceted engagement serves as a crucial conduit, allowing the publication to effectively convey its mission, goals, and any pertinent information to pertinent parties. By navigating these intricate lines of communication, the Editorial Board not only fosters a harmonious relationship with the university but also ensures seamless collaboration with external entities, contributing to the overall success and impact of the publication within the broader academic and professional landscape. This entails establishing and maintaining connections with various stakeholders to ensure the publication's interests are effectively represented and advocated for.

Moreover, the Editorial Board is tasked with the preparation of resolutions

and other pertinent communications, responding to directives from the Board itself. This involves drafting comprehensive and articulate copies that align with the publication's objectives and mission. Additionally, the Editorial Board is actively involved in the meticulous drafting of copies, ensuring that the language used is precise, coherent, and effectively conveys the intended message. This process involves a thorough review and refinement of the content to meet the publication's standards of quality and professionalism.

Furthermore, the Board takes on the responsibility of accomplishing and preparing the necessary paper requirements essential for various processing procedures. This encompasses the compilation and organization of documentation that may be required for official purposes, ensuring that all necessary paperwork is complete and accurate (Sirmata Editorial Policy, 2023). This supports Alaqabawy (2025), who emphasized that student media involves both content creation and organization participation.

This expanded role supports the view that campus journalism functions beyond content production, serving as space for student engagement and institutional participation (Camposano, 2021). The involvement of campus journalists in administrative and organizational processes highlights their dual function as both communicators and active contributors to institutional operations.

Existing perspectives often frame journalism primarily as a communicative function centered on content production. However, the findings of this study expand this view by demonstrating that campus journalists are deeply embedded in institutional processes, including

administrative coordination and organizational management. This suggests that campus journalism operates not only as a communicative practice but also as a form of participatory governance within educational institutions. By highlighting this dual role, the study challenges narrow definitions of journalistic work and contributes to a broader theoretical understanding of journalism as both a communicative and institutional practice.

Adaptiveness of Campus Journalists

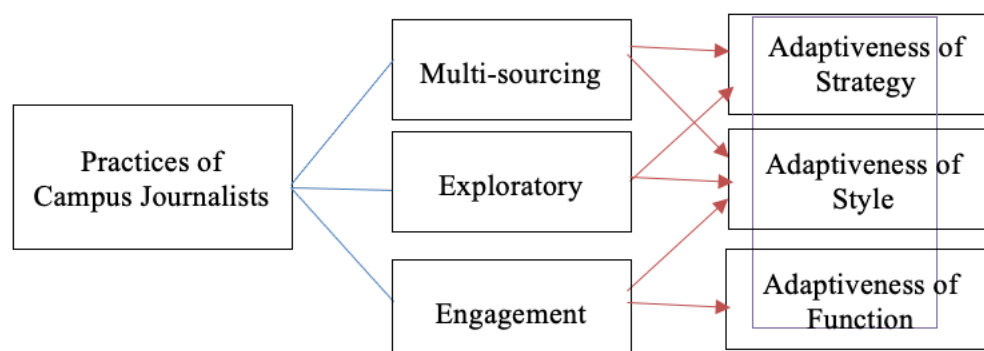
In relation to the first research question, the objective was to determine what the practices of campus journalists

were. The findings have resulted in campus journalists being adaptive when it comes to their day-to-day practices, and the sub-themes are connected to the concept of Adaptiveness of Campus Journalists.

This figure illustrates the conceptual relationships among the practices of campus journalists and the overarching theme of adaptiveness. The sub-themes—multi-sourcing, exploratory, and engagement- represent the key practices identified in the study. These practices collectively demonstrate the adaptability of campus journalists in terms of strategy, style, and function within the institutional and media environment.

Figure 1

Conceptual connections among the sub-themes for the first research objective



Source: the researchers' findings

As shown in Figure 1, multi-sourcing reflects adaptability in information-gathering strategies, exploratory writing represents flexibility in journalistic style, and engagement highlights adaptability in function. Together, these dimensions illustrate how campus journalists respond to the demands of their environment.

The adaptive nature of campus journalists identified in this study is further supported by existing literature in the Philippine context. This finding aligns with Ramos and Suizo (2024), who emphasized

that campus journalists demonstrate resilience and adaptability despite various challenges. Their ability to expand audience reach while experimenting with new storytelling techniques reflects the evolving nature of campus journalism in response to contemporary media demands.

Similarly, the findings are consistent with the work of Driz and Aguisondo (2025), who described campus journalism in the Southern Philippines as both fragile and resilient. While operating within constraints, student journalists continue to uphold journalistic standards while actively shaping institutional and

social discourse. This reinforces the idea that adaptability is not only a response to challenges but also a defining characteristic of campus journalism. Furthermore, the findings are supported by Advincula and Adtoon (2024), who noted that campus journalists remain committed to sustaining the traditions of storytelling, journalism, and creative expression despite the hurdles they encounter. This commitment highlights how adaptability is intertwined with both resilience and dedication to journalistic values.

Taken together, these studies strengthen the interpretation that campus journalists are not merely adapting out of necessity but are actively redefining journalistic practices within their contexts. Their adaptability reflects a balance between maintaining journalistic standards and innovating in response to changing institutional and media environments. As student media organizations often operate with limited personnel, journalists are required to perform hybrid roles, reinforcing their adaptability (Alaqabawy, 2025).

This adaptability is further reinforced by the broader challenges faced by campus journalism, including institutional constraints and evolving media environments, which require student journalists to continuously adjust their practices (Tomacruz, 2018).

Beyond supporting existing literature, this study advances a theoretical reconceptualization of campus journalism by positioning adaptability as a central organizing principle of practice. While previous studies often frame adaptability as a response to constraints, the present findings suggest that it is a constitutive feature of campus journalism itself. Campus journalists do not merely react to changing conditions; they continuously negotiate roles, strategies, and identities

within dynamic institutional and media environments. This shifts the theoretical lens from viewing campus journalism as a static training ground to understanding it as an adaptive system of practice, where flexibility is embedded in its very structure.

Achievements of Campus Journalists in Doing Their Practice

Winning Competitions. A prominent achievement identified among campus journalists is success in journalism competitions, particularly in press conferences. Participants consistently emphasized that their involvement in these competitions served as a significant indicator of their growth and competence in the field.

Campus Journalist W shared their long-term engagement in campus journalism as below:

When I was in elementary up until now, I joined campus journalism, so in elementary I was a two-time RSPC qualifier in the Sports Writing English category, and in high school, a three-time RSPC qualifier, and in college, I think “Kur-it”, second place in the Sports writing category (September 15, 2023).

Similarly, Campus Journalist G highlighted recognition received at the regional level:

High School, my last, it's very notable because in the Regional Schools Press Conference, I was awarded as 2nd Most Outstanding Campus Journalist of Region 1 and aside from that, during our Collaborative and Desktop Publishing days we were always at the Top 7 in the Regionals Schools Press so we consider that

as an achievement that I'm proud of (September 24, 2023).

These responses indicate that competitive achievements play a crucial role in validating the skills and efforts of campus journalists. Participation in press conferences provides opportunities for students to apply their knowledge, refine their craft, and gain recognition for their work.

While competitions provide recognition, scholars caution that an overemphasis on awards may shift focus away from the core values of journalism, such as truth-seeking and public service (Punzalan, 2020). Nevertheless, in this study, competitive success appears to complement rather than replace the participants' commitment to journalistic practice.

This finding is supported by Sariego (2022), who noted that School Press Conferences serve as platforms for developing journalistic skills, fostering discipline, and encouraging excellence among student journalists. Through these competitions, participants are exposed to diverse journalistic tasks, enabling them to enhance both individual and collaborative competencies.

Furthermore, Carbonilla (2021) emphasized that campus journalism in the Philippines, strengthened by the Campus Journalism Act of 1991, has cultivated a culture of excellence through events such as the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC). These competitions function as spaces for continuous learning, collaboration, and professional development.

From a broader perspective, winning competitions reflects not only technical proficiency but also resilience and commitment. These achievements serve as tangible outcomes of campus

journalists' dedication, reinforcing their confidence and motivating them to pursue further growth in the field.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding suggests existing views on achievement in campus journalism by demonstrating that competitive success functions not only as external validation but also as a mechanism for reinforcing professional identity. This suggests that competitions play a dual role in both skill development and identity formation among campus journalists.

Agenda-Setting. Another key achievement of campus journalists is their ability to influence discourse within their academic communities through their writing. The findings reveal that campus journalists engage in agenda-setting by addressing critical and often sensitive issues through editorial content.

Campus Journalist R described writing a collaborative editorial that tackled overlooked concerns:

I wrote an editorial in collaboration with another editorial member. I titled it "USC: Wounds Left Untouched". They were mostly happy about it, that someone was finally willing and got enough courage to speak out about the things that we usually don't speak about because in the campus setting, in every article, you cannot really please everybody unless it is a PR article so if you decide to push through with a controversial one, you have to make sure and you have to prepare yourself that the impact isn't going to be singular (July 21, 2024).

Similarly, Campus Journalist I shared how their editorial work prompted reflection among university stakeholders:

It was about PBBM's Presidency. It was a critique of his performance so far in office another one would be my article "What's in a name?", it's a commentary on the proposed changing of MMSU into FEMSU. Also, another article, our last editorial about the USC elections. The subheading that states "elected or appointed" was a success for me because I was finally motivated to put into writing the opinion that I've had for a long time already "Are leaders elected or appointed?" It was an eye-opener for the USC because they realized that it is important to get feedback, especially from Sirmata (July 24, 2023).

These accounts demonstrate that campus journalists are not merely reporters of events but active contributors to shaping institutional conversations. Through their editorials, they bring attention to issues, encourage dialogue, and influence how topics are discussed on campus.

This finding aligns with agenda-setting theory, originally developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, which explains how the media influences what audiences perceive as important by prioritizing certain issues. While traditionally applied to mainstream media, the present findings demonstrate that this function is equally relevant within campus journalism, where student publications shape awareness and discourse in a localized context (Valenzuela, 2019). This is further supported by Dewi (2025), who highlighted that student journalism can serve as a platform for advocacy by raising awareness on social and institutional issues.

Furthermore, this reinforces the role of campus journalism in addressing gaps often overlooked by mainstream media, particularly in institution-specific contexts (Labiste, as cited in Quilinguing, 2021). By focusing on issues directly affecting their academic communities, campus journalists contribute to a more grounded and community-centered form of reporting.

However, the findings of this study do more than confirm the applicability of agenda-setting theory. They suggest refining the concept by illustrating how agenda-setting operates in smaller, more immediate environments where interaction and feedback are more direct. Unlike large-scale media systems, campus journalism enables closer engagement between writers and their audience, allowing not only the identification of salient issues but also the stimulation of institutional reflection and response. This indicates that agenda-setting in campus contexts is both influential and interactive, functioning as a dynamic process of discourse formation within educational institutions.

Thus, the study extends agenda-setting theory by demonstrating that its mechanisms are not confined to mass media but are also embedded in micro-level communication spaces such as campus publications. In this context, campus journalists emerge as key actors in shaping localized discourse and fostering critical engagement within their institutions.

Personal Satisfaction. Beyond external recognition, campus journalists also identified personal satisfaction as a key achievement of their engagement in journalism. Participants emphasized that their experiences contributed to their personal growth, confidence, and critical thinking.

Campus Journalist R expressed that campus journalism serves as preparation for the professional field:

It is mainly for personal growth because I want to enter the real world industry knowing that I am equipped and I got enough glimpse of the landscape that if I'm going write another article, I'm going to write it with ease and confidence and having also the right people to guide and give you advice with how the world of journalism looks and I've learned that the Philippine journalism landscape is quite scary and so at least I have enough warning and I have enough preparations. (July 21, 2023)

Similarly, Campus Journalist E highlighted the development of critical thinking and passion:

For me, these achievements helped a lot to improve my personal growth, and it became a reason for me to become more passionate about what I do and to think more critically, not just through journalism but also through how I live. So, I need to critically think about my decisions and be aware of the things that are happening around me. So, in personal growth, you manage and develop skills personally as well as continually mold those skills to better function as a journalist (September 21, 2023).

These responses suggest that campus journalism fosters not only technical skills but also personal development. Through their involvement, campus journalists gain a deeper understanding of their roles, enhance their decision-making abilities, and develop a

stronger sense of purpose. Their experiences reflect how journalistic practice extends beyond task performance, becoming embedded in their personal growth and everyday thinking.

This finding aligns with existing perspectives that campus journalists are driven not only by recognition but also by advocacy, personal growth, and a sense of purpose (Carbonilla, 2021). Similarly, Šimunjak (2023) identified personal fulfillment, role satisfaction, and everyday gratification as key sources of well-being in journalism, while Lyons (2022) emphasized that journalism provides a sense of accomplishment through contributing to public awareness and social understanding. These perspectives reinforce the idea that journalism is sustained not only by external rewards but also by intrinsic motivations.

From an analytical perspective, these findings highlight a distinction between external and internal dimensions of achievement in campus journalism. While earlier themes, such as winning competitions and agenda-setting, reflect outward indicators of success, personal satisfaction represents the internalization of these experiences. Campus journalists derive meaning, confidence, and identity through their engagement, suggesting that the value of journalism is not solely measured by output or recognition but also by its transformative impact on the individual.

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding contributes to a more holistic understanding of journalism by emphasizing its affective and developmental dimensions. Existing perspectives often prioritize outputs such as content production, influence, and professional recognition. However, the results of this study suggest that intrinsic rewards like fulfillment, purpose, and self-

development are central to sustaining journalistic engagement. This positions campus journalism not only as a professional practice but also as a formative space where identity is conducted and continuously negotiated.

Campus Journalism as Empowerment

Regarding the second research objective, which sought to determine the achievements of campus journalists, the findings indicate that these achievements collectively reflect empowerment. Building on the earlier discussion of practices, in which adaptability emerged as a defining feature, the present findings shift the focus to outcomes, illustrating how these practices translate into both individual development and institutional influence. The themes of winning competitions, agenda-setting, and personal satisfaction demonstrate that campus journalism

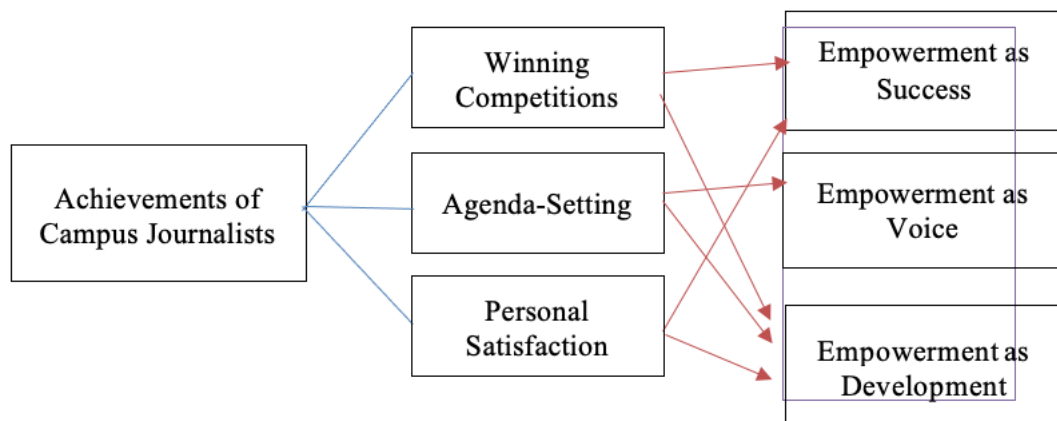
enables not only skill acquisition but also the development of agency, voice, and identity.

Campus journalism functions as a space where students develop skills, exercise their voice, and engage in meaningful participation. As noted by Aguja, as cited in Cortes (2018), involvement in campus journalism enhances competencies and deepens students' appreciation of journalism's role in upholding press freedom. This empowering function is further supported by Republic Act No. 7079, which institutionalizes student press freedom and enables campus journalists to articulate ideas and contribute to public discourse (Goxmel, 2019).

This figure illustrates how winning competitions, agenda-setting, and personal satisfaction contribute to empowerment through development, voice, and success.

Figure 2

Conceptual Connections Among the Sub-themes for the Second Research Objective



Source: the researchers' findings

As shown in Figure 2, winning competitions reflects empowerment through development and success. Participation in journalism contests allows campus journalists to validate their competencies and build confidence. This

aligns with Dhariwal (2016), who argues that achievement in competitive environments fosters self-efficacy and motivation. In the context of campus journalism, these accomplishments

strengthen both technical skills and professional identity.

Agenda-setting, on the other hand, represents empowerment through voice and development. Campus journalists can shape discourse within their academic communities by addressing relevant and often sensitive issues. This supports agenda-setting theory, which explains how the media influences what audiences perceive as important (Valenzuela, 2019). It also aligns with the findings of Dewi (2025), who emphasized that student journalism serves as a platform for advocacy and social awareness. Through their writing, campus journalists contribute to dialogue and promote critical engagement within their institutions.

Personal satisfaction highlights empowerment as a source of success and development. The findings show that campus journalists derive fulfillment from their work, which contributes to their confidence, critical thinking, and personal growth. This is consistent with Šimunjak (2023), who identified fulfillment and role satisfaction as central to journalistic practice, and Lyons (2022), who noted that journalism provides a sense of purpose through contributing to public knowledge. These experiences demonstrate how campus journalism fosters both professional development and self-awareness.

Furthermore, the link between empowerment and satisfaction is supported by Lwangasi (2008), who found that individuals experiencing greater empowerment report higher satisfaction. This suggests that the personal fulfillment expressed by campus journalists is closely tied to their sense of agency and meaningful participation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that campus journalism serves as a transformative and empowering

experience. Through their achievements, campus journalists develop confidence, critical awareness, and a sense of purpose, while also contributing to the broader academic community. Beyond contributing to existing literature, this study advances a theoretical reconceptualization of campus journalism by positioning empowerment as a central, defining feature rather than a secondary outcome. Rather than functioning solely as a training ground, campus journalism emerges as a dynamic space where individuals actively construct meaning, exercise influence, and negotiate their roles within institutional contexts. This reinforces its dual function as both a developmental and participatory practice, extending existing frameworks on student media and journalistic engagement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, which aimed to identify the practices of campus journalists in performing their functions, the study explored in depth the experiences of campus journalists regarding their practices, which have only been vaguely addressed in previous studies. The findings underscore the evolving role of campus journalists within the media landscape, emphasizing their active participation, adaptability, and dedication to shaping and enriching discourse within the academic community.

The significance of these findings lies in the way they highlight campus journalism as more than a student activity. It functions as a formative space where young journalists develop essential skills in reporting, writing, verification, and institutional engagement. More importantly, the study shows that campus journalism helps shape student voice and participation within academic institutions, making it a meaningful component of

educational and communicative development.

The second research objective, which focused on identifying the achievements of campus journalists through their practices, revealed that their achievements include competitive accolades, the impact of their published works, and personal gratification, all of which contribute to a sense of empowerment. The significance of these findings is reflected in the way campus journalism serves as both a training ground and a transformative experience that builds confidence, agency, and purpose among student journalists.

Overall, the findings underscore the adaptive and empowering nature of the campus journalism experience. They highlight the significant role campus journalists play in shaping narratives, fostering engagement, and deriving personal fulfillment from their journalistic work. These contributions demonstrate that campus journalism is not only educational but also socially and institutionally impactful. Moreover, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on campus journalism by providing empirical insights into the lived experiences of student journalists. It emphasizes the relevance of campus journalism in contemporary media education and its role in developing future journalists who are capable, reflective, and socially engaged.

By documenting the lived experiences of campus journalists, this research provides valuable local evidence that can inform journalism education, student publication policies, and future academic inquiries. It addresses the gap in the literature that often overlooks the dual role of campus journalists as both learners and active contributors to media discourse. However, the study involved a small

sample size of six participants from a single state university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other institutions. Second, the participants were all members of the editorial board, which may not fully represent the perspectives of other campus journalists with different roles or levels of experience.

Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data from interviews, which may be subject to personal bias or selective recall. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable qualitative insights into the practices and achievements of campus journalists, offering a foundation for future research in this area. Given these limitations, future studies may broaden the participant pool by including campus journalists from different universities and regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of campus journalism practices. Including non-editorial staff may also provide a broader perspective on campus journalists' experiences. Second, further research may explore the challenges and constraints faced by campus journalists, such as institutional limitations, resource constraints, and external pressures, to provide a more holistic view of their experiences. Third, future studies may examine the impact of campus journalism on the academic community, particularly its influence on student engagement, awareness, and institutional accountability. Lastly, researchers are encouraged to employ diverse methodologies, including mixed-methods or comparative studies, to deepen analysis of campus journalism as both a practice and a field of study.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The Authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

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