

Creative Music Production

Professional Project

DL838 Creative Music Production, Thesis

Gavin O'Connell, 27/04/2026

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How the working environment in a radio studio affects the presenter's performance

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the material, which I now submit for assessment on the programmes of study leading to the award of BA(Hons) in Creative Music Production, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others except to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work. No portion of the work contained in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to this or any other institution.

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Acknowledgements

The researcher would like to thank his mentor Conor Brennan and lecturers Brian Carty and Timm Jeschawitz in providing feedback and advice on the thesis and the project video.

The researcher would also like to thank Thomas Kerr, station manager of Radio Maria Ireland who helped distributed the online questionnaire to the presenters in Radio Maria Ireland as well as the station managers of other community radio stations in Ireland. The researcher would like to thank George Kelly, a presenter in Radio Maria Ireland, in taking part in the recorded interview.

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

This thesis researches the topic and answers the question “How the working environment in a radio studio affects the presenter's performance”.

The study examines the conditions experienced and preferred by the radio presenter in the radio studio to help achieve the optimum performance for the radio presenter in the best possible environment.

The project investigates what affects the working environment and performance of a radio presenter. This was achieved through research, surveys, a podcast and interview.

The literature review looks at the history of radio in Ireland. The review starts with an overview of Irish radio and its culture and outlines the role of community-based radio stations in Irish broadcast media. The literature review also examines the design considerations for a broadcast studio and the psychological factors associated with radio broadcasting.

Radio holds an important place in society today. It is still a popular medium and important culturally (The Irish Times 2026). This is discussed further in the literature review under the sections Culture (Section 2.1.3) and Role of Community Radio (Section 2.1.4). This research focused on a local radio station, Radio Maria Ireland (RMI) ¹.

The methodology discusses the primary research methods used for this project and the resources required. The analysis discusses the results from the primary research methods used in the methodology of the project and these are reflected in the discussion. The thesis concludes with a summing up and possible future direction of research.

1.2 Aim & Objectives

The aim and objectives of the project are as follows:

Aim:

¹ Radio Maria Ireland is a not-for-profit, listener funded, charity, non-commercial, internet-streaming radio station.

To investigate How the working environment affects a radio presenter's show.

The study will include contextual information on the societal, cultural & historical impact of radio. It will also examine the conditions experienced and preferred by the radio presenter in the radio studio to help achieve the optimum performance for the radio presenter in the best possible environment.

Objectives:

- To research the societal, cultural and historical impact of radio.
- To research the impact on the presenter of a variety of factors e.g. Lighting, Furniture, Scripted/Unscripted, Live/Pre-recorded, Stress, Programme Type, etc.
- To measure by survey/questionnaire how the working environment affects the performance of radio presenters.
- Record & interview radio presenters to further investigate the impact of the work environment.

- To show and demonstrate findings and make recommendations.

Chapter 2

2.1 Literature Review

To put the project into context, the history of radio was researched and how radio impacts culture. The role of community-based radio stations in the Irish broadcast media was researched. The literature review also examines the design considerations for a broadcast studio and the psychological factors affecting presenters that are associated with radio broadcasting.

2.1.1 History

A number of scientists including Guglielmo Marconi and Nikola Tesla were involved in the invention of radio but, there were disputes over who could claim to be its first inventor. In the 1890s, Guglielmo Marconi developed the first radio communication system and on the 12th December 1896 Marconi gave a public demonstration of radio in London, England (Bathgate 14). Marconi got the very first telegraphy patent in England in 1896 which was based on the theory that as the height of the ariel increased, the range also increased.

In 1901, he made history by broadcasting a wireless signal across the Atlantic from England to Canada (“Radio History: What You Need to Know”). This proved that radio waves could travel long distances and was the start of radio communication. At the beginning, radio communication was mainly used for maritime operations for example, using Morse code for distress signals at sea (“Radio History: What You Need to Know”).

During the First World War, UK government restrictions meant that a lot of radio transmitters were taken off air and, so, the medium of radio was not utilised significantly by the British during this period. However, Marconi’s technology was used by the British in the war as they were able to avoid attacks by the Germans as they intercepted their radio signals (Sterling *et al*).

In the early 20th Century, radio was mainly used for communications such as Morse code and Marconi didn’t recognise that radio was going to be a medium for voice transmission. However, some people realised it could be an

alternative to the telephone and in the 1920s, broadcasters began to test transmitting audio to audiences (“Radio History: What You Need to Know”). Charles Herrold made the first planned radio broadcast in 1912, and it is generally agreed that he was the first person to transmit entertainment broadcasts on a regular basis (Bathgate 28-29) and thus, people began listening to the radio for recreational purposes.

The first commercial radio station was KDKA in Pittsburgh in the United States in 1920, broadcasting the results of the 1920 US presidential election (Sterling *et al*). This was the beginning of radio becoming established as an entertainment and news medium.

By the end of the 1920s, radio was also established as a key advertising medium which had a major impact on the culture of society. Also, music publishers wanted royalties for their copyrighted music and performers also demanded money for their performances.

In November 1954, the first transistor radio which was portable was commercially produced by Texas Instruments and Industrial Development Engineering Associates. The radio used a 22.5-volt battery and had a high price of just under US\$50. Within a few years, prices declined and the transistor radio became hugely popular (Bathgate 32). Listening to the radio became part of the culture of the everyday with people listening to the radio on the move for example, on buses, walking and running and also in shops and in the home.

In Guy Starkey's book, *Radio in Context*, published in 2014 detailed information on radio is outlined, putting the history of radio into context and focusing on the important role of new technology. Starkey provides information on the different types of radio stations such as commercial radio, community radio, hospital radio, college radio.

2.1.2 History of Radio in Ireland

In Ireland, test radio broadcasts began in November of 1925 from a studio at 36 Little Denmark Street, in Dublin with the following "Sé seo stáisiún 2RN Baile Átha Cliath ag triail" ('This

is 2RN Dublin testing’)" (Doyle-O'Neill "*2RN and the Birth of Irish Radio.*"). These test transmissions lasted a few weeks before formal broadcasting commenced operation in January of 1926, on 2RN, which would later become known as RTÉ. The station was broadcast to a 30 kilometre radius. Douglas Hyde gave the opening speech and after the speech, a programme of music was played. In 1927, a studio was established in Cork and in October 1928, 2RN moved into the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin.

At this time, a lot of programmes were sponsored, for example, the toothpaste, Euthymol was the first sponsored programme and was broadcast on 31 December 1927. Other sponsorships included Independent Newspapers, the cigarette makers, PJ Carroll, the music shop Walton's and the Irish Hospitals' Trust, which sponsored the Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes' programme, promoting the sale of tickets for the Irish Sweepstake.

During the early days of Irish radio, the largest event broadcast was the World Eucharistic Congress in 1932 when the tenor, John McCormack, sang at High Mass. This was with a new high-

powered transmitter and the broadcast was also relayed by the BBC and a number of European stations. This was the largest event broadcast in the early years of Irish radio. After the Second World War, Raidió Éireann acquired a symphony orchestra, a light orchestra, a choir and a company of actors. This was an important cultural aspect to radio in Ireland.

In Ireland, radio quickly became a mass communication tool and had an impact socially and culturally. To this day, people say, “I heard that on the radio” and this shows the importance and influence radio has on Irish people. Norris Davidson, who was a broadcaster and documentary film writer said “when the public relies on the broadcasting service without realising that it is relying on it” (Pine xi).

Louise Noone goes into detail on the history of radio in Ireland in her dissertation *Radio in the Digital Age: The Evolution of Radio Culture in a New Media Era*, published in 2015. Noone details the history of how radio has evolved since the 1920s. She also examines the history of radio in Ireland, and the significance radio has culturally in Ireland and internationally.

In common with other authors like Starkey, the future of radio in competition with other new technologies like podcasts is explored. A key question that Noone asks is can radio stations compete with music streaming services such as Spotify which allows unlimited music to suit a listener's likes with no interruptions from presenters/DJs. Studies by Karkula and Uimonen have shown that the younger population are more likely to listen to their own music rather than the radio, however, the older population prefer to listen to the radio for discussion programmes and content.

Noone points out that the role of music is so important in radio broadcasting that "programmers need to find a way to make radio the gatekeeper it once was". Even in this digital age, Irish radio listeners are still amongst the highest in the world (Noone 39).

Listeners can contribute directly to a programme by texting or through social media where the listener has access to radio shows and presenters. Online platforms allow users to access

and provide feedback to programme/presenters even after the programme is over. This can provide further content for programmes.

Noone ends her thesis with the following advice “What the future holds for radio is impossible to predict. There are challenges such as online competition from music blogs and online music streaming software. However, as long as we can preserve that culture and community, Irish radio can survive anything” (Noone 44).

2.1.3 Culture

Over the years, political leaders such as Franklin D. Roosevelt used the medium of radio to communicate and influence the public with their political messages (Bathgate 116). In Ireland, Douglas Hyde, who became the first president of Ireland (1939-1945) delivered the first public radio broadcast on 2RN on the 1st of January 1926 (Balfe 9). To this day, radio gives a platform to political leaders and influences public opinion. Radio is a primary source of news and offers listeners timely information.

Radio has had a huge impact on the culture of society. It provides a variety of different types of programmes, for example, it provides a platform for all types of entertainment (music, drama, comedy, documentaries, arts) and current affairs. Talk radio according to the Cambridge English Dictionary, is *“a type of radio programme on which events and people in the news are discussed and listeners call to talk”*. Over the years, talk radio programmes on Irish radio such as the Gay Byrne Show, The Gerry Ryan Show and Liveline were culturally significant as listenership was high and people discussed the programmes amongst themselves. They shaped public opinion and were even sometimes controversial (Doyle-O'Neill 133-135).

Radio has also had and still has a huge impact on music. Before radio broadcast on the airwaves, people could only play music in their homes on record players or buy sheet music to play themselves. Radio changed this and enabled live music to be broadcast and also records played. Radio has enabled all different genres of music to gain popularity.

“People still seek radio out for alternative programming such as topical talk shows. If radio can continue to engage and reflect social cultures in this way, its community will stay intact” (Noone 39). This is backed up by the latest JNLR figures which reveal that Irish radio audiences continue to listen to a significant amount of radio everyday with the majority of Irish adults listening to the radio every day.

The JNLR figures are a credible independent source of information because the data was collected by Ipsos B&A who are a reputable research organisation who carry out quantitative and qualitative research on behalf of their clients. According to the JNLR figures (Hall), radio listenership in Ireland is performing well with almost 3.5 million listeners every weekday and so radio remains a major player in the Media Industry (Irish Audio Report 2025).

2.1.4 Role of Community Radio

Community radio has been in place in Ireland for over thirty years. It has strengthened communities and brought them

closer together by providing relevant news and information about the local community and this provides a social benefit to the listeners.

A definition of community radio is found in the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland's Policy on Community Radio Broadcasting, "A community media organisation is characterised by its ownership structures, its content production and/or dissemination activities, and its relationship with the community it is licensed to serve. It is owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organisation whose structure provides for membership, management and operation primarily by members of the community. Its content production and/or dissemination activities are based on access and participation by members of the community and reflect the special interests and needs of that community. Its relationship with the community seeks to reinforce other organisations and activities aiming to empower and develop that community." (BAI 6).

Community radio has given a voice to people. In a research report *Drivers of Change? Community Radio in Ireland* by Niamh Gaynor and Anne O'Brien, whose research focused on a number of Irish community radio stations, found out that the community radio stations "were confident that they added value to their local communities" (Gaynor, O'Brien 16).

Another important role community radio has is training its volunteers in all of the necessary skills that equip them to learn how to produce radio programmes and gain on-air experience of a radio station. A lot of presenters and producers gain valuable experience in this way and they can go on to work in commercial radio stations.

In the journal *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, Daithí McMahon has written about *How Local Radio in Ireland has Maintained Audience Attention and Loyalty*. Local radio has remained relevant and has maintained its listeners over time by engaging local listeners and providing them with local relevant information that the commercial

radio stations are unable to provide. Local radio in Ireland continues to be strong and keeps its listeners engaged.

The culture of radio in Ireland is examined by Rosemary Day in *Community Radio in Ireland: Building Community, Participation and Multi-Flow Communication* (Day 6-8). The role of community-based radio stations and its difference from national broadcasters is highlighted in this paper.

“The 2009 Broadcasting Act recognises community radio and community television as a distinct strand of media in Ireland. The other two strands identified in the Act are public service media and independent commercial media” (BAI 5). In her paper, Day suggests that community radio is part of public service media as it is not commercial radio which is set up to make profits. The main difference between community and commercial radio stations is that the commercial stations are focused on earning revenue mostly from advertising whereas community stations are more concerned with social issues.

Community radio stations are of particular relevance to this project, as Radio Maria Ireland (RMI), which this project is somewhat focused on, was initially a parish radio station in Italy and expanded worldwide. There are 79 RM stations globally in 60 different countries with 25 in Europe including one in Ireland with approximately 500 million listeners worldwide.

2.1.5 Design Considerations

The book *Radio Production Worktext: Studio & Equipment* by David Reese, Lynn Gross, Brian Gross, published in 2005 describes the setup of a typical radio station including equipment and configuration. Acoustics and ergonomics being some key factors discussed. Reese states “*Acoustics refers to how sound ‘behaves’ within an enclosed space and ergonomics refers to design considerations that help reduce operator fatigue and discomfort*” (Reese et al. 1).

In considering the design of the studio, the U-Shaped layout (Figure 1) is most popular because it allows easy access for the presenter to reach all the equipment. The options for the

presenter to be standing up or sitting down is also discussed in the above book along with the furniture which is also a design factor. In the textbook, *Making Radio and Podcasts: A Practical Guide to Working in Today's Radio and Audio Industries* by Steve Ahern, published in 2022, the furniture is also discussed and sometimes even the obvious things are suggested, like chairs being on wheels and having adjustable height settings to achieve optimum reach. Ahern also mentions that equipment should be located within arm's reach which seems obvious but is important to the smooth operation of the studio. Reese *et al.* also advise that "*Chairs must move easily because even though most of the equipment is situated close to the operator, he or she may have to move around to cue CDs or speak directly into the microphone. The production stool must also be well constructed so that it doesn't squeak if the operator moves slightly*".



Figure 1. U-Shaped Radio Studio Layout (FMUSER)

A thesis by B. Ngunjiri was published as part of a Bachelor's degree in Architecture in Kenya also discusses the different types of studios such as radio and television studios. This thesis discusses a variety of factors associated with these types of studios including size, use, mixing suites, etc. The study investigates the architect's role in the design of studios. Like other texts mentioned above, the author considers acoustics to be a very important factor in the design of a radio studio. Acoustic and sound insulation are key factors associated with this study. Ngunjiri concentrates on the role of the architect in the design of radio studios and so, is of limited use in this topic of research.

Practical information on the main principles and techniques used in radio programming and useful information on capturing audio and using microphones is detailed in Starkey's book *Radio in Context* which is also important when considering studio design.

2.1.6 Psychological Factors

Anxiety levels before broadcasting is one of the key issues for presenters. In an article in the newspaper, *Irish Independent* in 2016, the late Marian Finucane of RTÉ said *"I regard it as doing your Leaving Cert in public, every three months"* (O'Grady), so even in 2016, a well-respected veteran broadcaster felt the pressure of maintaining radio listenership figures considering the Leaving Certificate is regarded in Ireland as a very stressful event by many.

In commercial radio, the world of broadcasting examines the quarterly JNLR figures which estimates the audience for local and national radio. Presenters like RTÉ's Miriam O'Callaghan have said they *"can feel physically sick for days in advance of the figures being released"* (Friel). This has also affected Ray

D'Arcy, ex-RTÉ, in recent times when his listenership figures plummeted by 10,000 which may have had some impact on his contract terminating for his RTÉ Radio 1 show.

A study by Linda Ifeanyi Nwoke examines the psychological effect of broadcasting on presenters and focuses on pre- and post-broadcast anxiety. The findings are important for supporting presenters with a number of recommendations made and so relevant to this study. They include information such as “guidelines for broadcast professionals’ mental health support, provide insights for developing anxiety-reduction interventions tailored to live broadcasting contexts, and enhance broadcast engineering design to incorporate mental health considerations” (Nwoke 4637).

In another study in Nigeria, the effect of the working environment on the performance of workers in radio stations was examined. In summary, the findings showed that the physical work environment (which includes the layout, the furniture, the lighting, etc.) had a positive and significant effect on the employees in the radio stations. In the same

study, the psychological work environment was examined and it was found to have a positive and significant effect on the employees' technical skills and equipment management in the stations (Johnson, Ikechukwu 2025).

Chapter 3

3.1 Methodology

In order to investigate the findings of the literature review, a methodology was designed for this research, which included questionnaires, interview and vox pop. The full methodology will be discussed in this chapter.

The questionnaire element was done through an online anonymous questionnaire survey using Microsoft Forms. Upskilling in the use of this tool was required in advance of the project start. The interview was conducted in person with one person and was videoed and audio recorded with their consent. The vox pop was recorded using a phone.

The scope of the project initially was focused on the staff of the radio station, Radio Maria Ireland (RMI), with the objective of learning the views of its radio presenters and how they prefer to work. It was agreed by the station manager that a questionnaire, interview and vox pop could be conducted at the RMI station. The station manager at RMI assisted with the

electronic distribution of the survey to its staff presenters. In considering the research topic, many of the different factors that could affect a radio presenters' performance were considered along with what was found in the secondary research and these were developed into questions for the research survey. In particular, Reese *et al.* go into detail on the production studio environment and consider the design considerations for a studio including the layout, furniture and aesthetics (1-8). The questions in the online survey were developed from this research. Also, a number of the initial questions asked were intended to draw the presenters into the questionnaire and make them feel comfortable answering. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

The survey was carried out during February and March 2026. Subsequently, it was decided to extend the survey out to include other community radio stations in Ireland. Using CRAOL's (Community Radio of Ireland Society Ltd) list of community radio stations in Ireland ("Our Stations"), 33 station managers were emailed the survey asking them to

circulate it to their presenters. This extended the survey, providing a broader audience for the research project.

A Short Guide to Effective Survey Questionnaires, a guidance document from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, was used to develop the research questionnaire. The document provides tips for developing questionnaires and on questionnaire design.

As described by Moran, a questionnaire is a *“set of questions designed to gather standardised information from a number of people. They are best used for studying social or demographics trends, cause and effect, attitudes and simple behaviours”* (Moran 6).

For this survey, a consent form (Appendix 1) was developed as part of the questionnaire which was compulsory and needed to be completed before the survey was filled out to ensure compliance with consent and to make sure the participants voluntarily agreed to participate and were over the age of 18. A Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 1) was also

developed providing details about the survey, the purpose of the research and the anonymisation and storage of the data.

Reminders were sent to the potential participants to complete the survey and to inform them of the closing date.

A secondary research method used in the project was a one-to-one interview used to get qualitative data on the topic of this research. For this, the interviewee was a presenter with RMI who agreed and provided consent (See Appendix 2) to do the interview which was recorded and filmed. Interview questions were developed with a view to finding out more detailed information about the presenter's studio preferences (Reese *et al.*) and a number of questions on his views on community radio and its future (McMahon 4).

To investigate further into the topic, a short vox pop with RMI presenters was carried out. The limitation on this was the sample size as only two presenters were sampled.

After all of the survey results were collected, the data was collated and analysed and findings and recommendations made from both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study.

Chapter 4

4.1 Analysis

The results of the online survey, the one-to-one interview and the vox pop are discussed below.

4.1.1 Online Survey

When the online survey was open in February to March 2026, 27 respondents completed the survey. Although this sample size was small, it was a reasonable number to analyse and interpret the results.

When asked about the studio setup, the majority of respondents prefer to do their show seated using a swivel chair. Some presenters (7%) prefer to stand during their show. Figures 2 and 3 (Question 7 and 8) show these results.

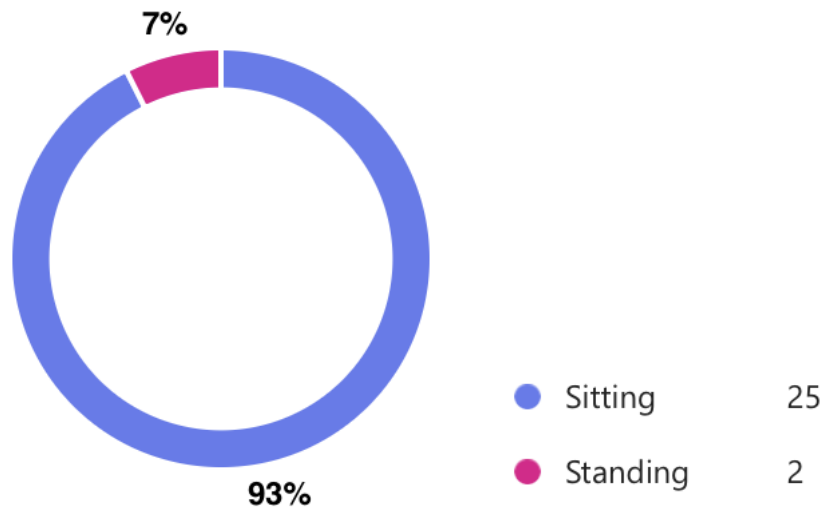


Figure 2. Prefer sitting or standing

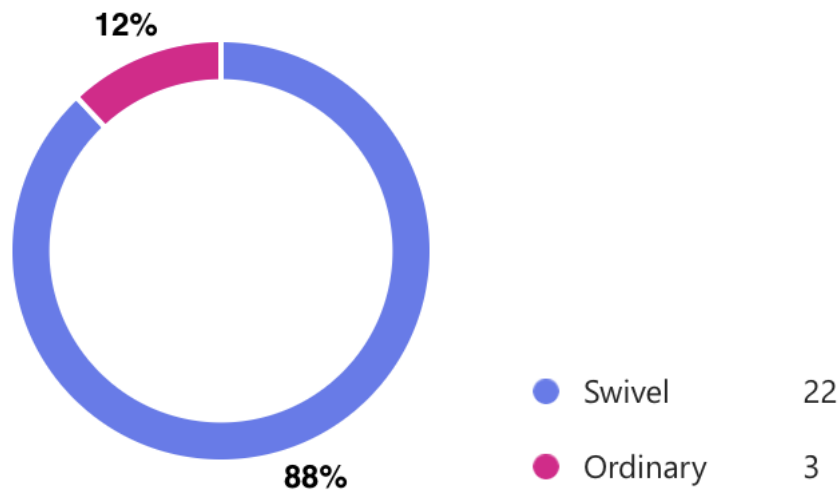


Figure 3. Prefer swivel chair or ordinary chair

Also, in relation to the physical environment of the studio, 70% of the presenters do not think the studio lighting affects their performance with only under 30% indicating it has an effect on their performance. Comments from this group who think lighting affects their performance have a preference for the lighting not to be too bright as it can cause headaches and

have a negative impact on concentration. Most presenters (63%) prefer the lights to be fully on. Figures 4 and 5 (Questions 9 and 10) illustrate these results.

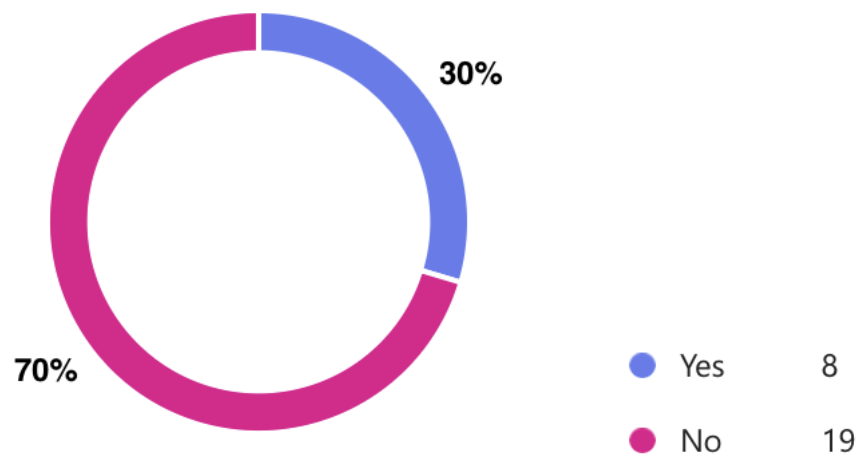


Figure 4. Studio Lighting affects presenter's performance

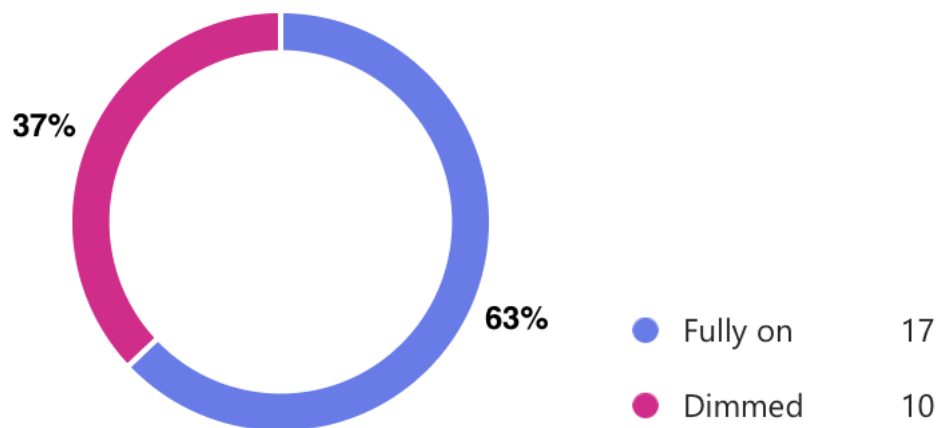


Figure 5. Prefer lighting fully on or dimmed

When asked about the current studio setup meeting their physical requirements (Question 11), more than 80% of

presenters said the current studio setup meets their physical requirements extremely well with only a few saying it meets their physical requirements somewhat well (See Figure 6). This result shows that all the presenters are happy that the setup in their studio meets their physical requirements.

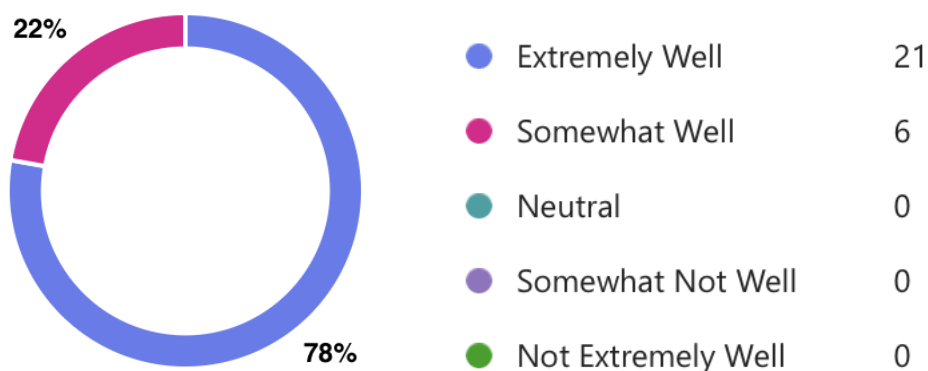


Figure 6. Does the current studio setup meet physical requirements

The presenters elaborated on this question with several of them commenting that the studio was:

- Spacious
- Desk is easy to handle
- Comfortable and works well
- All the equipment close to hand
- Information seen at a glance and

- Good lighting.

It can be seen from Figure 7 (Question 12) that more than 60% of presenters prefer to do a live show rather than a pre-recorded show. Some of the reasons provided for this include that things flow more naturally when live. One of the comments was “When pre-recording it is easy to get bogged down with perfection and stop/start recording to get things perfect which can interfere with conversation flow”. Other comments were “recording takes longer, sounds more natural, and like doing live for any interaction that might come in”.

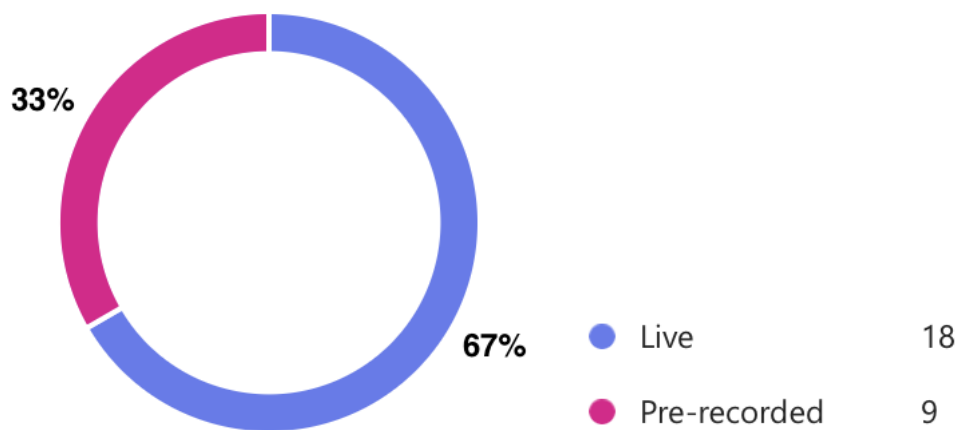


Figure 7. Does presenter prefer to do show live or pre-recorded

Although the majority prefer to do a show live, there is a significant percentage (33%) preferring pre-recorded for reasons such as “being able to correct mistakes, not having the

expertise or broadband to do a live show, sounds better after editing and enables review and adjustments if necessary”.

A question relating to technical training on how to use the studio (Question 13) and a question asking how comfortable they are at solving technical issues (Question 14) showed that 81% had received training (Figure 8) with 38% (Figure 9) saying they feel comfortable or somewhat comfortable at solving technical issues when they arise.

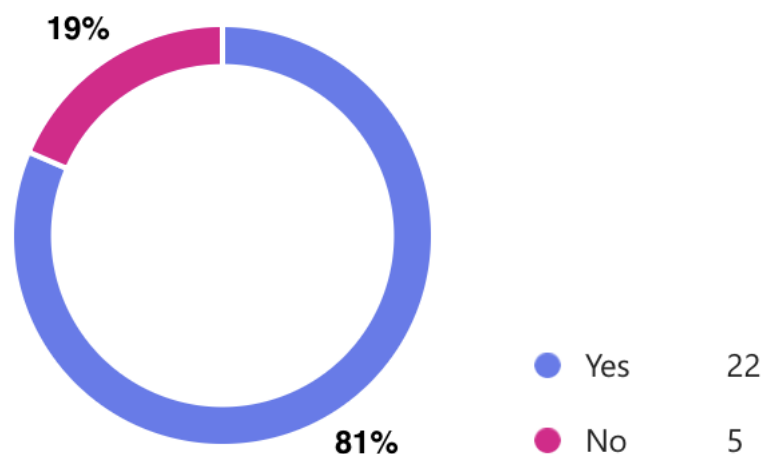


Figure 8. Have you ever received technical training on how to use the studio?

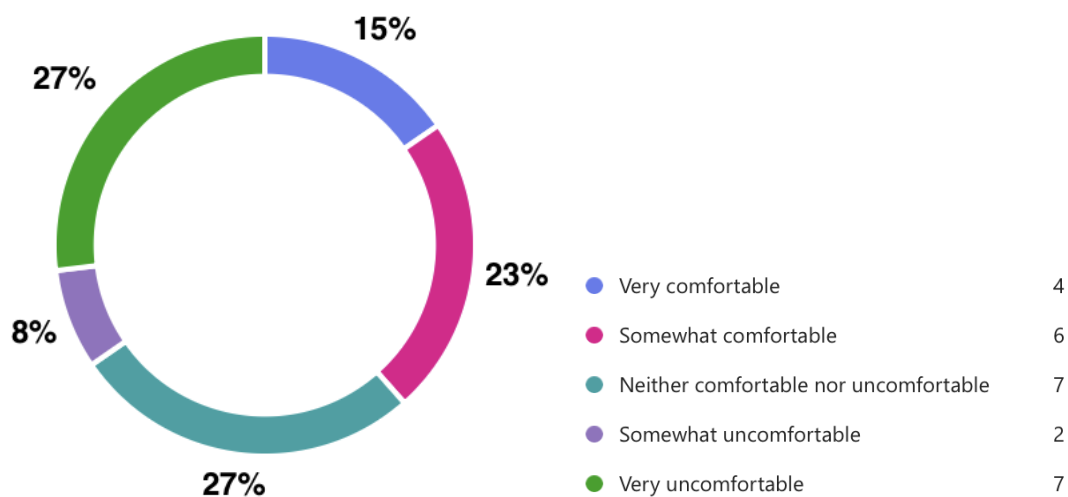


Figure 9. How comfortable are you are solving technical issues in the studio

When asked whether they would benefit from additional technical training, 88% of the presenters responded and of that percentage, the majority indicated they would not benefit with some of the reasons being: “they don’t do the technical side of the show, they have good editors at their studio and prefer to leave it to them and have good sound engineers”.

When asked about how presenter’s feel before their show, the comments varied from anxious, a little stressed, focused and prepared, to excited, comfortable and confident. When asked about how they feel during their show, the comments included feeling calm, comfortable and mostly confident. And finally, when asked about how they feel after their show, the

comments showed the presenters felt exhilarated, relaxed, satisfied, accomplished and comfortable reflecting how the show went.

96% of participants say that doing a radio show can be demanding or sometimes demanding, while only 4% say it is not demanding for them (Question 21). Therefore, most presenters would find presenting a radio show demanding. See Figure 10 below.

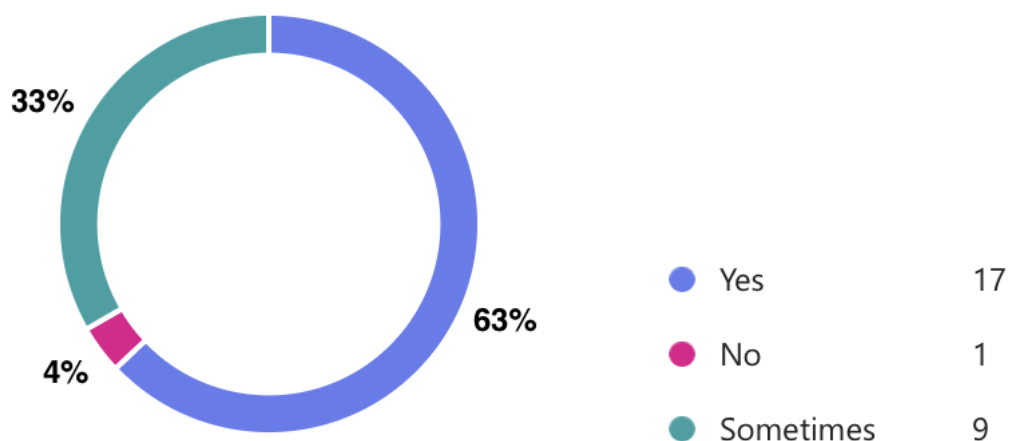


Figure 10. Doing a radio show can be demanding

When asked about the challenges associated with performing on air on a radio show, the comments varied from “preparation and relevance, getting the timing right, technical

issues and getting the correct amount of content and appropriate content”.

When asked about having a debrief with the editor following their show (Figure 11) (Question 22), most participants (81%) say they don't have a debrief with the editor with only 19% say they have. For those who said yes, they were asked do they find it useful and all said yes (Figure 12) (Question 23). For those who said no (Figure 13) (Question 24), they were asked would you find them useful so, 48% of those who responded to that question said they would find it useful while 52% said they won't find it useful. Therefore, everyone who has a debrief finds it useful and a significant number (48%) say they would find it useful if available.

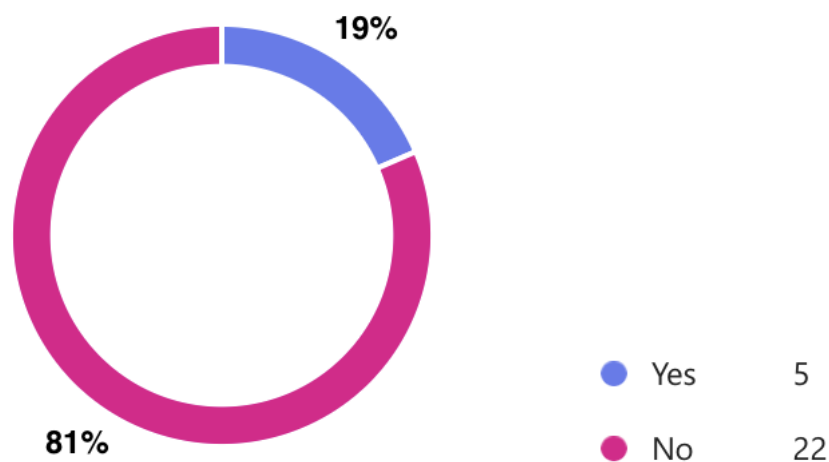


Figure 11. Following your show, do you have a debrief with the editor

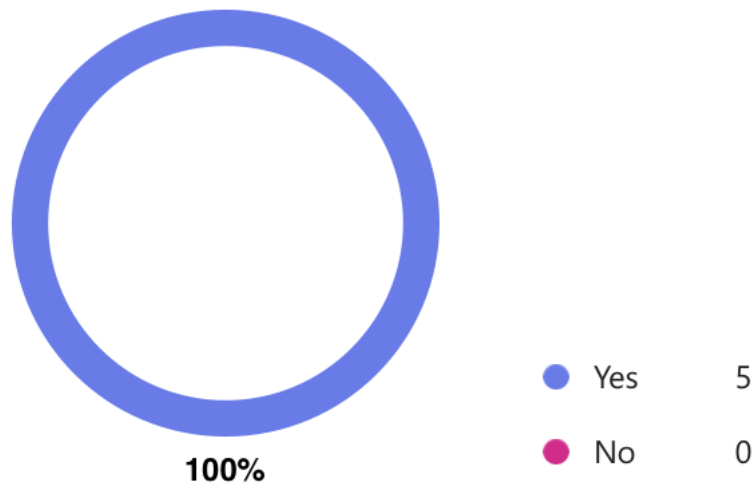


Figure 12. If yes, do you find it useful

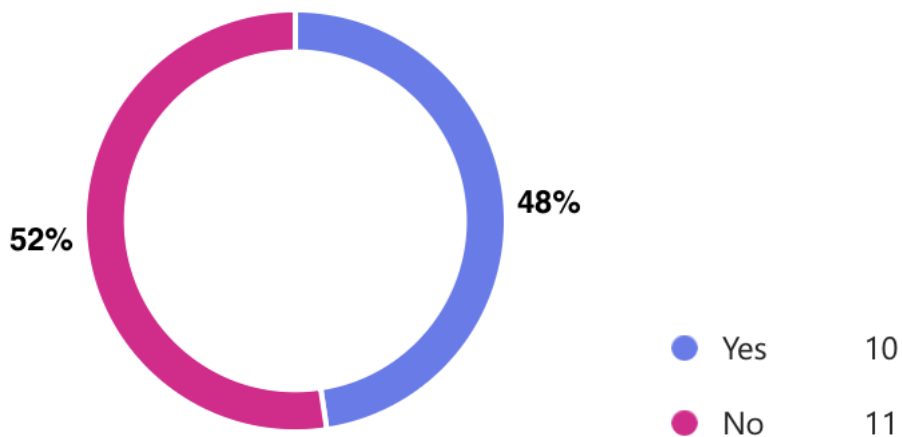


Figure 13. If no, would you find it useful

Finally, the presenters were asked for general comments and some of these included “Community radio is great, we would all benefit from some form of production meetings on a regular basis, to assist each other & share difficulties &

achievements alike, enjoy being part of a voluntary group doing good work in the local area”.

The results of the online questionnaire showed there was considered responses from the participants which indicates the presenters have an interest in their performance and participating in the community.

4.1.2 Interview

As part of the qualitative research, an interview took place and this was included in this research as a radio podcast. (A full transcript is available in Appendix 2).

During the interview, the interviewee was asked about his studio setup preferences which linked to the online survey. When asked about the lighting in the studio, the interviewee prefers to have the lighting on so he can see what he is doing. This is in line with the majority of the survey respondents to the online survey when 63% of the presenters prefer to have the lighting on (See Figure 4).

Like the 81% of participants in the survey, the interviewee said he had technical training on what to do if things go wrong and was comfortable at solving minor technical issues on his own. He said “it's very useful. It saves me because sometimes the sound men and technical staff might be doing something else and if it's a minor thing I could try and fix it myself”.

The interview went into some detail with the interviewee on community radio and the future it holds. These questions were not asked in the online survey. When asked about the impact of community radio stations, the presenter said that community radio is important for what is going on in an area. When asked about the difference between community radio stations and commercial radio stations, the topic of advertising was mentioned as some community radio stations do not have ads like RMI and a previous radio station he worked for only do a limited number of local ads.

When asked about the future of community radio, he said that it has “a good future ahead because people are turning to community radio as opposed to national radio”.

The limitation of the qualitative research was that only one interviewee took part as it was difficult to arrange with additional presenters. This was the major shortcoming.

4.1.3 Vox Pop

The question asked in the vox pop was:

What do you like about the setup here in Radio Maria Ireland?

In summary, the answers included the friendliness of the station, the camaraderie and the presenters feeling of self-worth.

Chapter 5

5.1 Discussion

The research successfully investigated how the working environment in a radio studio affects a presenter's show and performance by examining the conditions experienced and preferred by radio presenters.

The project findings are discussed in Sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.4 with recommendations made.

5.1.1 Studio Design

A number of the questions asked in the survey (Questions 7 to 14) relate to the working environment of the presenter i.e. the studio design and setup. The interviewee was also asked about studio preferences. Reflecting on the survey results which found some variation and differences in some of the preferences from the presenters around design considerations, making it difficult to recommend one preference over another. So, it is recommended that presenters are asked directly by the station management about their preferences such as lighting, seating and layout,

etc. A checklist could be developed in this regard and discussed with new starts and also distributed on a regular basis to existing presenters as their preferences can change over time. This would be a good practice in keeping in touch with the presenters' preferences. It is noted from the research that all the presenters were happy that the studio setup meets their physical requirements (See Figure 5).

5.1.2 Psychological effects

Stress, satisfaction and confidence were among the issues commented on when asked about how the presenter feels before, during and after their show (Questions 20 to 22). Most of the presenters (96%) said that radio presenting can be demanding (See Figure 9) and this finding is consistent with the research highlighted in the literature review. Linda Ifeanyi Nwoke found that “live broadcasting is a high-pressure profession that needs targeted interventions to reduce the effects of stress and anxiety in the broadcasting profession”. Nwoke recommended developing anxiety-reduction training programmes including stress management and training on

relaxation techniques, provide access to mental health resources, and foster supportive work environments such as team building. Although, in this current research, the presenters did not indicate excessive stress and anxiety (this may be because presenting on community radio stations may be less stressful than commercial stations), Linda Nwoke's recommendations are supported.

In Ireland, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, requires employers to put in place systems of work which protect employees from hazards which could lead to mental or physical ill-health. Employers are obliged to assess any risks which might cause stress and this is the case for radio presenters. So, measures need to be put in place to assess the risks and to put controls in place to avoid hazards leading to ill health. This would be good practice for radio stations as it would comply with the legislation and would be helpful in stress reduction.

5.1.3 Technical training

The subject of technical training was addressed in questions 17 to 19 and 23 to 26 and was also addressed in the one-to-one interview who said “it’s very useful”. However, the survey showed that only 38% (Figure 8) said they feel comfortable at solving technical issues when they arise. However, when asked whether they would benefit from additional technical training, the majority indicated they would not benefit. This is a surprising and unexpected result, and the recommendation would in fact be to provide presenters with sufficient technical training, so they feel more comfortable at solving technical issues when or if they arise and they are able to react to unexpected events.

5.1.4 Qualitative Research

The role community radio has in Ireland was highlighted in the one-to-one interview with one of the presenters in Radio Maria Ireland who experiences this with listener feedback received on an ongoing basis. This was also highlighted in the literature review in Daithí McMahon’s research where he mentions people connect with their local radio station with

phone-ins etc. George Kelly from Radio Maria Ireland and Daithí McMahon are in agreement that people link in and connect with radio and McMahon said *“connecting people is an important function of radio and with recent efforts to remain relevant in an evolving digital world, radio still holds an important place in the lives of Irish people”* (McMahon 5). This is an important and interesting finding of the current research.

In the qualitative research, when asked about the difference between community radio stations and commercial radio stations, advertising was mentioned by the interviewee as the principal difference as commercial radio stations are dependent on advertising for revenue.

In Coimisiun na Meán’s report, *Media Service Code and Media Service Rules Advertising (Radio Broadcasters)*, the rules around commercial radio advertising are detailed *“the time given to advertising in any clock hour does not exceed a maximum of 12 minutes”* (Comisiun na Meán 8). Whereas community radio stations are only allowed a maximum of six minutes in a clock hour. Therefore, community radio stations

have less advertising airtime possibly making it a more enjoyable experience for listeners and this was also the preference from the presenter in the qualitative research.

5.1.5 Overall Project Findings

The aim of the research project was “to investigate How the working environment affects a radio presenter’s show” and this was achieved through the research. Primary research carried out asked the presenters directly about their preferred studio setup and whether or not it affected their performance. The survey gathered information from the presenters, providing useful data to inform radio station managers on how the working environment affects a presenter’s show. The literature review also described different studio setups of typical radio stations along with equipment and studio configurations. The two research methods together provide a strong answer which addresses and answers the research question satisfactorily.

An objective of the study was to put it into context by researching the societal, cultural and historical impact of radio

and this was achieved through secondary research in the literature review. This research provided evidence of the importance of radio in Irish culture and society.

Another principal objective was to research the impact on the presenter of a variety of factors e.g. Lighting, Furniture, Scripted/Unscripted, Live/Pre-recorded, Stress, Programme Type, etc. and this was conducted through online survey which was anonymous allowing the presenters to give their opinions freely. This objective was also researched by carrying out an in-person interview when the interviewee was asked directly about his views on the studio setup. The results of this research showed that the impact of all the factors taken together indicated that the presenters were generally happy and that the studio setup met their physical requirements.

The objective to measure by survey was achieved using Microsoft Forms in February and March 2026 and a sufficient number of responses were received to allow analysis.

The objective to further investigate the impact of the work environment on a radio presenter's performance was done through a recorded interview and was used as part of a radio podcast recorded for the project. This provided qualitative data for the study and gave an insight into how the presenter likes to work. The podcast summarised the project results and also discussed the impact of community radio. The podcast was created in a Pro Tools session and is available directly from the author of this thesis as a wav file.

Chapter 6

6.1 Conclusions

Based on this research, radio remains popular in Ireland with Irish listeners, and radio broadcasting playing a key role in Irish culture and society today.

Community radio remains a strong presence in the media industry and has maintained its listeners by engaging with them and providing them with local relevant information that the commercial radio stations are sometimes unable to provide.

In conclusion, the research showed that presenters have preferences such as choice of chair, standing or sitting, lighting and studio layout, which impact on the way they like to work and these should be taken into consideration in the stations they work in. Also, as radio broadcasting is a demanding profession, training programmes on stress management are recommended. Finally, technical training was a key consideration for presenters' performance and so advisable for presenters.

6.2 Future Direction

The results of the research will be shared with the station manager of Radio Maria Ireland and the station managers of the community radio stations that circulated the questionnaire to inform them about the data collected and findings.

The possible future direction of the research would be to carry out more quantitative and qualitative research in order to get a better data set. This could be achieved by extending the research into commercial radio stations.

Chapter 7

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Chapter 8

8.1 Appendices

8.1.1 Appendix 1 – Survey

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: How the working environment in a radio studio affects a presenter's performance

Researcher: Gavin O'Connell

Institution: Institute of Art Design and Technology Dún Laoghaire

Email: N002221005@iadt.ie

Purpose of the Research:

This research focuses on the working environment in a radio studio and how it affects a radio presenter's performance. The study will examine the conditions experienced and preferred by the radio presenter in the radio studio to help achieve the optimum performance in the best possible environment.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. It is a voluntary survey. If you do decide to take part, you will be have to indicate your consent through a form. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving any reason.

If I take part, what do I have to do?

You will complete an online questionnaire, and it should take approximately less than 5 minutes to complete.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

The benefits of taking part in this research are that the survey is short and quick and more information on the working environment affecting a radio presenter's performance will be collected and information can be used to ensure an effective working environment. The data that will be collected will be used as part of a research project for 4th Year of BA Hons in Creative Music Production at the Institute of Art Design and Technology.

Once the data is collected, it will be stored securely on a password protected computer. The level of identification is anonymous. The data that will be collected will be retained for one year. The confidentiality of the participants will be safeguarded securely during and after the research study. In the long-term, the arrangement for keeping the data is that they will be secured on a password protected computer with Microsoft Authenticator. Once the results of this research are collected, they will be used in a thesis as images and figures for BA Hons Level 8 in Creative Music Production in IADT Dun Laoghaire.

Online Survey

How the working environment in a radio studio affects the presenter's performance

My name is Gavin O'Connell. I am a 4th Year student in Creative Music Production at the Institute of Art Design and Technology Dun Laoghaire. As part of 4th Year, I am doing a Research Project. My research project is How the working environment in a radio studio affects the presenter's performance. As part of the research, I am carrying out a short online questionnaire, and I would be grateful if you would complete this.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. By sharing your opinions, you will help me in my research. The survey should take you about 5 minutes to complete. Your answers will remain anonymous. Please do not write your name or any other identifying details in the survey.

Invitation

Before you decide whether you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the Participant Information Sheet carefully (link below) and discuss it with colleagues if you wish. The Consent form below must be submitted to complete this survey.

Please feel free to contact me if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information on this study. The IADT Institute Research Ethics Committee has approved this study.

If you have any queries, please contact me at N00221005@iadt.ie

Please find link to Participation Information Sheet Below

https://iadt-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/n00221005_iadt_ie/IOCjqrn9l2-OTpLSSqwm5JruAYS_AVkeqtz5ZTxSN7vXSE0?e=Iw79ZV

Consent Form

PLEASE answer the following questions in order to consent to the survey

*** Means answer Required**

1. I have read the Participation Information Sheet *

Yes

No

2. I voluntarily agree to take part in this survey *

Agree

Disagree

3. I am at least 18 years old *

Yes

No

Online Questionnaire

How the working environment in a radio studio affects the presenter's performance

4. What is the ideal duration of your show? *

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes
- 45 minutes
- 1 hour
- More than 1 hour

5. Is your show scripted or unscripted? *

- Scripted
- Unscripted
- Prefer not to say

6. What type of programme is your favourite to host. Please rank from Most Favourite to Least Favourite *

	Least Favourite	Don't Like	Neutral	Like	Most Favourite
Interview	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Panel Discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prayer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Do you prefer to do your show sitting or standing? *

- Sitting
- Standing

8. If sitting, what type of chair do you prefer to use?

- Swivel
- Ordinary

9. Does the lighting in the studio affect your performance? *

- Yes
- No

10. If so, why?

Enter your answer

11. Do you prefer the lighting in the studio fully on or dimmed? *

Fully on

Dimmed

12. Are you left handed or right handed? Does this affect the layout you prefer in the studio?

Enter your answer

13. How well does the current studio setup/layout meet your physical requirements? *

Extremely Well

Somewhat Well

Neutral

Somewhat Not Well

Not Extremely Well

14. Please give the reasons for your answer.

Enter your answer

15. Do you prefer to do your show live or pre-recorded? *

- Live
- Pre-recorded

16. Please explain your answer.

Enter your answer

17. Have you ever received technical training on how to use the studio? *

- Yes
- No

18. How comfortable are you are solving technical issues in the studio? *

- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable

19. Do you feel like you could benefit from additional technical training? If so what? *

Enter your answer

20. How do you feel before, during and after your show? *

Enter your answer

21. Doing a radio show can be demanding. Do you agree? *

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

22. What are the challenges associated with performing on air on a radio show? *

Enter your answer

23. Following your show, do you have a debrief with the editor? *

- Yes
- No

24. If yes, do you find it useful *

Yes

No

25. If no, would you find it useful

Yes

No

26. How often do you have meetings with the editor

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Never

27. Any other comments?

Enter your answer

8.1.2 Appendix 2- Radio Podcast: Interview with presenter in Radio Maria Ireland, George Kelly

Recorded Tuesday 24 March 2026

GOC = Gavin O'Connell

GK= George Kelly

GOC: Hello and welcome to my radio podcast. My name is Gavin O'Connell and today I'm going to be talking about radio presenters, particularly in the community radio, about the work environment of a radio presenter. In this podcast I'm

going to discuss some of the results from a survey that was conducted, then I'm going to be chatting to George Kelly from the community radio station Radio Maria Ireland on this topic.

George has been working in radio for a number of years now with the radio station Together FM and has worked with Radio Maria Ireland for eight years. So a veteran broadcaster.

I recently conducted a survey asking presenters in the community radio sector about how they like to work. This included the physical environment and the stresses associated with broadcasting. The results of this survey were presented in a thesis as part of my fourth year project in IADT Dun Laoghaire.

Now, I'm going to be talking to George Kelly.

GOC: Hi, George. Thank you for taking the time for me today to talk to you, and I'm looking forward to be hearing from you.

GK: Thank you very much.

GOC: So, to start off, could you tell me how long you're working in Radio Maria Ireland for?

GK: I'm in Radio Maria Ireland since 2018, so how long is that now? Seven years? Six years?

GOC: Eight years.

GK: Eight years, is it?

GOC: Yes.

GK: And Maths was never my best subject.

GOC: So, do you have experience in any other radio station?

GK: I do. another one as well, yeah.

GOC: Okay. What's the name of that radio station?

GK: Together FM.

GOC: Okay. So, can you compare other studios to this one?

GK: I can, yeah.

GOC: Is the layout of the studio similar?

GK: It's fairly similar. It's just that maybe the actual equipment might be more modern, if you know what I mean.

GOC: Okay. Can you describe any similarities or differences?

GK: Well, it's really instead of sliders for volume and that we've got push buttons and, you know, it's more modern technology if you know what I mean as opposed to Radio Maria is only working on support from the listeners we don't get funding okay so but we do the best we can with what we have you know and it's the sound men are great here they look after us with what they've got they do brilliant you know.

GOC: Okay so, is there anything that you liked from the previous studios that you'd like to introduce here?

GK: Just if the equipment was more modern, that's about it, because everything else works the same, you know.

GOC: Okay, so what do you like about the setup here in Radio Maria?

GK: I just like the whole lot that it's a different environment than Together FM because we're more religious orientated where Together FM is more community orientated for the community. This is more religious getting to the country. Together FM is only a Dublin station and, you can get it online as well, but we support it and the community supports Together FM.

GOC: Okay. Have you ever suggested any changes here? And if so, were they implemented?

GK: No, it wouldn't be my thing to suggest that. I just do my programs and that's it. I don't get involved. People tell me what they want me to do. I don't tell them.

GOC: Have you visited any of the other Radio Maria Studios in Europe, for example?

GK: No.

GOC: Do you ever get any feedback from any of your listeners or the editorial team?

GK: I do. My programme is a request program here and in both stations, actually, I get people texting in with requests and phoning in.

GOC: Okay.

GK: And they tell me if they like the show and if they don't, you know, if I do anything wrong. That's what it is. So, like, I'm people orientated.

GOC: Okay. Do you generally do your show live or pre-recorded?

GK: I do it live.

GOC: Okay. So, have you ever had any technical problems? And if so, do you know what to do?

GK: I would, yeah. Once I'm shown, I can do it. But I usually leave all the technical to the technical people. I try and concentrate on what I think I'm good at myself.

GOC: Okay. Did you ever receive any technical training on what to do if things go wrong?

GK: Yes.

GOC: Okay. Would you find it useful if no?

GK: Oh, absolutely, it's very useful. It saves me because sometimes the sound men and technical staff might be doing something else and if it's a minor thing I could try and fix it myself just if it's in the studio where I am yeah.

GOC: Okay so, 30% of radio presenters say the lighting in the studio does affect their performance what do you think?

GK: The lighting, yeah, well I like to see what I'm doing it doesn't affect my performance like you know because I have

glasses and all that but it's nice ambience yes to have the light on and especially if you're on later.

GOC: So more than 60% of radio presenters prefer to have the lights fully on when doing the radio show what do you think of this do you prefer it fully on or dimmed

GK: Dimmed probably

GOC: Okay. Also, what I want to mention is, what is the one thing you would change about the current setup here in Radio Maria?

GK: The current setup. It's quite good setup as far as I can see.

GOC: Okay, so moving on, I would like to ask a few questions and get your views on community radio. What do you think is the impact of community radio stations?

GK: The impact of it? It's very important for it like what's going on in the area. And that's what we do here in both stations. But Radio Maria is a different, as I say, we concentrate on the religious end of it as a way of conveying messages to people. Like the other station where I am, it's all what's happening in the area, like, you know, for young people and so on and so forth.

GOC: Okay. In your opinion, what's the difference between community and commercial radio stations?

GK: Well, commercial is all ads, as far as I can see. You know, you get a couple of songs maybe, and then you get maybe five minutes of ads. Of course, that's what keeps the commercial stations on the air. But we don't do ads here on Radio Maria, especially, and we only do local ads on Together FM.

GOC: Okay.

GK: So, they're very limited. We don't put on minutes of ads. We might get about four ads during an hour programme on Together FM. And we don't get any ads here on Radio Maria.

GOC: Okay. So, this year marks 100 years of RTE. How do you think community radio stations have changed over this period?

GK: Oh, they've definitely changed. They've woken up a lot of people in Ireland as regards to what people want to listen to. Do you know what I mean? Because when I was young, we didn't have music. Radio Ireland, as it was called in those days, closed down. And they didn't come back on until 1 o'clock. And they had morning programmes. And you wouldn't hear music.

You'd hear, you know, maybe Irish music, which was nothing wrong with that. Classical music. But if you wanted pop music, you had to listen to Radio Luxembourg.

GOC: Okay.

GK: When I was a teenager, that was where I learned my music from, Radio Luxembourg. And the pirate radio changed the whole face of radio not only in Ireland but in England it was continuous pop music and of course they gave out licenses to others and that's why even BBC in England started it was only BBC and then we had BBC Radio 1 Radio 2 and all that in England we never had that.

GOC: Has the surge in podcasts had a positive or negative impact on community radio stations?

GK: Podcasts?

GOC: Yes, podcasts.

GK: Podcasts are very important. If you miss a program, you can look back and listen I think it's a very important podcast, yeah.

GOC: Okay. Finally, what does the future look like for community radio stations?

GK: The future, well, it's building up. I'd say it's a good future ahead because people are turning to community radio as opposed to national radio.

GOC: Okay

GK: I think so because it's more personal than national radio is, I don't know, you wouldn't know what station you're listening to when you turn on national radio. Everything is playing the same.

GOC: Okay, George, thank you very much for all that information. It was very useful. Thank you for taking the time with me today again.

GK: Thank you, Gavin.

GOC: You're welcome, George.

GOC: So that was George Kelly talking to me about how presenters like to work, his views on community radio, and a little background on his journey in radio broadcasting.

One of the key takeaways was on the issue of technical training and what to do if things go wrong. He emphasised the importance of this training so he could try and fix it himself if it was a minor problem. In relation to community radio, George Kelly says he is very positive and confident about the future of community radio which offers listeners local information about what is going on in their area and he feels the demand for community radio is increasing.

That is all I have in my podcast. Hope you enjoyed listening and have learned some information on the working environment of a radio presenter, particularly in community radio. Thank you very much for listening and goodbye.