

Threats to Journalism Practice in South America Due to Lack of Trauma Literacy in Professional Training: Results of a Survey in Brazil and Colombia*

Amenazas al ejercicio del periodismo en América del Sur por falta de alfabetización sobre trauma en la formación profesional: resultados de una encuesta en Brasil y Colombia

Ameaças à prática do jornalismo na América do Sul devido à falta de alfabetização sobre trauma no treinamento profissional: resultados de uma pesquisa no Brasil e na Colômbia

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.syp43.tjps>

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Received: 11 may 2023

Accepted: 18 october 2023

Published: 19 july 2024

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Abstract:

This discussion is part of the work of the Research Group on Education in Journalism and Trauma (JETREG), focusing on the exposure of Brazilian and Colombian journalists to risks and traumas in the exercise of their profession. The article analyzes responses of 50 Brazilian and Colombian professors who participated in the web survey on traumatic coverage and the inclusion of this topic in journalism teaching. The method involves web searches and desk research. The theoretical debate comprises studies of journalism, traumatic coverage and traumas (Ogunyemi & Akanuwe, 2021). The fact that in Colombia and Brazil most journalism schools are private results in avoiding talking about risks of traumatic situations that the profession involves, as this can affect the demand of young people who want to graduate for this job and have great impact on already offering and distributing dispersed classes in the curriculum. The study pointed out at least three variables in Brazil and Colombia that can trigger trauma in journalists: i) gender attacks, ii) coverage of human rights violations, and iii) attacks on press freedom and journalists. The results point to a consensus on the vulnerability of professionals and the lack of training in resilience to trauma in journalism curricula.

Keywords: Trauma Literacy, Journalism, Training, South America, Education.

Resumen:

Esta discusión forma parte del trabajo del Grupo de Investigación en Educación en Periodismo y Trauma (JETREG), centrado en la exposición de los periodistas brasileños y colombianos a riesgos y traumas en el ejercicio de su profesión. El artículo analiza las respuestas de cincuenta profesores brasileños y colombianos que participaron en la encuesta web sobre la cobertura traumática y la inclusión de este tema en la enseñanza del periodismo. El método involucra búsquedas en la web e investigación documental. El debate teórico comprende estudios sobre periodismo, cobertura traumática y traumas (Ogunyemi y Akanuwe, 2021). El hecho de que en Colombia y Brasil la mayoría de las facultades de periodismo sean privadas hace que se evite hablar de los riesgos de situaciones traumáticas que implica la profesión, ya que esto puede afectar la demanda de los jóvenes que quieren graduarse para este oficio y tener gran impacto en la oferta y distribución de clases ya dispersas en el currículo. El estudio señaló al menos tres variables en Brasil y Colombia que pueden desencadenar traumas en los periodistas: i) agresiones de género, ii) cobertura de violaciones a los derechos humanos y iii) ataques a la libertad de prensa y a los periodistas. Los resultados apuntan a un consenso sobre la vulnerabilidad de los profesionales y la falta de formación en resiliencia al trauma en los currículos de periodismo.

Palabras clave: alfabetización traumática, periodismo, formación, América del Sur, educación.

Resumo:

Esta discussão faz parte do trabalho do Grupo de Pesquisa sobre Educação em Jornalismo e Trauma (JETREG), com foco na exposição de jornalistas brasileiros e colombianos a riscos e traumas no exercício de sua profissão. O artigo analisa as respostas de 50 professores brasileiros e colombianos que participaram da pesquisa na Web sobre cobertura traumática e a inclusão desse tópico no

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ensino de jornalismo. O método envolve buscas na web e pesquisa documental. O debate teórico inclui estudos sobre jornalismo, cobertura traumática e traumas (Ogunyemi & Akanuwe, 2021). O fato de que na Colômbia e no Brasil a maioria das escolas de jornalismo é privada faz com que se evite falar sobre os riscos de situações traumáticas que a profissão envolve, pois isso pode afetar a demanda de jovens que querem se formar para esse trabalho e ter grande impacto na oferta e distribuição de aulas dispersas no currículo. O estudo apontou pelo menos três variáveis no Brasil e na Colômbia que podem desencadear traumas nos jornalistas: i) ataques de gênero, ii) cobertura de violações de direitos humanos e iii) ataques à liberdade de imprensa e aos jornalistas. Os resultados apontam para um consenso sobre a vulnerabilidade dos profissionais e a falta de treinamento em resiliência ao trauma nos currículos de jornalismo.

Palavras-chave: alfabetização sobre trauma, jornalismo, treinamento, América do Sul, educação.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the difficulties that journalists already faced in their professional activity in different countries of the North and Global South. These included the growth of fake news, deep fakes, misinformation, precarious work, personnel cuts in newsrooms, insecurity, closure of vehicles, public distrust, and attacks by governments and politicians, physical and verbal attacks on the press, including cyberbullying, unemployment, drop in advertisements, and crises in the industrial management model of the news companies (Nielsen, 2016; Waisbord, 2017; Rocha & De Figueiredo, 2020; Pithan et al., 2020). Throughout the past five years, for example, Mexico, followed by Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic, recorded the highest number of journalist killings (Unesco, 2021, p. 10). Meanwhile, impunity is the general rule in crimes against journalists in Colombia; according to the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP), it occurs in 78.8% of the cases. Journalists are often exposed to incidents that involve physical or mental harm (Seely, 2019).

The professional skill becomes insufficient to develop the journalistic practice in a context of more work with increased pressure, loss of professional autonomy, low wages, trauma exposure, attacks, and violence from a hostile and polarized society. The result is exhaustion, mental diseases, trauma and occupational damage, and psychological distress (*Taking Care...*, 2022). According to a study developed with 916 workers in the Canadian media, stress levels worsened in the pandemic context and 92% women and over 90% workers under 50 years old stated to feel more stressed than they used to feel in other times (*Taking Care*, 2022, p. 9). The research appointed mental health impacts such as levels of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. Another report pointed out that “lack of trauma training leaves media workers in the lurch: with 90% of *Taking Care* respondents mentioning that they didn’t get trauma training in school, and 85% hadn’t received it at work” (*Taking Care*, 2022, p. 28). The need to insert such discussion in the workplace to change the professional culture is one of the conclusions of a study developed in England with 120 journalists along two years by the Headlines Network (Jo, 2022).

In Brazil, the Profile Survey of the Brazilian Journalist (Lima et al., 2022) was conducted with 6,594 respondents during the pandemic period, indicating that 66.2% of the sample mentioned they felt stress at work, 65.9% of them were diagnosed with stress, and 20.1% reported that they received the diagnosis of a work-related mental disorder. This shows that resilience training should be one of the objectives of journalism courses at all levels since the spaces where the professional culture is formed include undergraduate and graduate courses, representative entities, and the job market (Freidson, 1998). One of its key elements should focus on raising awareness about the ways all humans can be affected by critical incidents and trauma and the steps to be taken to reduce the intensity, frequency, and impact of evoked reactions upon their lives in the short, medium, and long terms. This would better prepare the professionals and promote lifestyle adjustments that would be advantageous for high-risk journalists before assignments and also help them manage their personal and social resources to mitigate the impact of what they have reported upon (Ogunyemi & Akanuwe, 2021).

Meanwhile, in Colombia, the study titled “Communicate without harm” indicates that mental health requires, for example, the existence of material factors, such as employment, housing, or road infrastructure, in addition to immaterial aspects such as equity, security, hope, respect for differences and a strengthened social capital, that is, peaceful possibilities of coexistence and social solidarity (Cano Busquets et al., 2020, p. 26). Colombian journalists experience abundant threats and acts of violence, as well as corporate and governmental obstacles to publishing the truth. A paper published by Journalism Practice used in-depth interviews with sixteen journalists in the post-conflict era to explain the severity of the problem in deeply textured ways. Some media professionals had to leave the country because of such threats (Barrios & Miller, 2021). That paper showed the direct relation of the political and social trajectories in Colombia, a country whose conflicts and tensions have grown due to intolerance and the fact that third parties or individuals are constantly pursuing an agenda destined for personal or economic benefit, ergo the governmental obstacles.

This article analyzes the risks and threats faced by the journalism practice in Brazil and Colombia and the perspective of the professors regarding the inclusion of trauma discussion in undergraduate journalism courses. The reflection is part of the international research project Journalism Education and Trauma Research Group (JETREG).¹ The premise is that journalists “are at risk of physical, emotional, moral and psychological injuries due to exposure to traumatic events throughout their careers” (JETREG, n/d) and that stressful situations have been intensifying in the society of risks (Beck, 2011). That author pointed out that society in late modernity is permeated by uncertainties and lack of institutional control to prevent any catastrophic event at global level. This corresponds to those risks that cannot be measured by the technological advancement and impact the civilizing process. They result from the technical-economic development creating a landscape of global risk (Beck, 2011).

Brazil and Colombia are among the most insecure countries in South America for the practice of journalism (Healay, 2022) when physical and virtual attacks, deaths, and violations of freedom of the press are considered. They are also countries with high rates of social inequality, criminality, police violence, disrespect for human rights, and corruption; themes that cross investigative journalistic coverage and breaking news.

The report titled Situation of human rights in Brazil shows a significant increase in the number of acts of violence and threats, particularly from political polarization, including the so-called “virtual militias”: digital media attacks to disqualify newspapers through the use of robots and hashtags on Twitter (Repórteres sem Fronteiras [RSF] & Instituto Tecnologia e Sociedade do Rio [ITS-Rio], 2021).

To address this theme, the discussion is structured in four topics: a literature review on journalism studies and trauma; methodology, data collected by the application of online questionnaires in Brazil and Colombia, analysis triangulated with classifications of types of trauma and risks in both countries, and finally, considerations, to highlight the similarities and particularities of each country.

Literature Review

In journalism, traumatic facts, both individual and collective, are raw material for the news (Silva, 2017) and are naturalized as potential news values for being unexpected events. In risk societies (Beck, 2011), traumatic events become common and less unlikely due to certain factors such as illegal deforestation, global warming, growth of social, economic, and geographical differences, migration and refugee flows, and xenophobia, among others. Beck (2011) saw a divided world subjected to risks that were constantly ignored by the social body even before the COVID-19 pandemic. That author’s discussions focused on the environmental problem and the inexistence of global sustainability.

In such context, journalists frequently have to cover traumatic events at the local-regional and global scales, and these professionals might experience this practice more often along their career, which might affect their health. According to Ogunyemi and Akanuwe (2021, p. 35), studies developed by Buchanan and Keats

(2011), and Keats and Buchanan (2012) revealed “that journalists who witness trauma and disaster events are at risk for physical, emotional, and psychological injury”.

Those authors classified traumatic events based on the criteria put forward by the American Psychiatric Association (2013) as events that involve real exposure to or death threat, severe injury, or sexual violence. Such exposure might occur in different ways that include personal experience, witnessing what happens to others, and repeated or detailed exposure (Ogunyemi & Akanuwe, 2021).

Some examples of these incidents are floods, landslides, urban, domestic and gender violence, racism, civil and military conflicts with death and threats, homicides and femicide. Brazil is a country where these incidents are rather common according to the *Atlas da Violência* (Violence Map) (Cerqueira et al., 2021, p. 14). Regarding lethal violence, in 2019, 6416 civilians died as a result of police violence; the death rate of black women is 65% higher than that of women that are not black; black individuals represent 77% of the homicide victims; and 277 indigenous individuals were killed when their land was invaded and in events of illegal resource exploitation and damage to their heritage.

In addition to social problems, there are environmental problems. Colombia is ranked first among the countries in South America with the highest number of people affected by floods, 10,108,1000, referring to the same decade. A landslide in Colombia in 2017, caused 349 deaths and affected more than 45,000 people (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [UNDRR], 2021).

With each natural disaster that occurred in Brazil in 2022, about 3,400 people were directly affected, taking into account the homeless, fatal victims, and people affected by droughts. These were the most recurrent, accounting for 40% of the environmental problems in the country, while heavy rains, floods, and inundation represent 15.7% of the occurrences (Janone, 2022).

Consequently, journalists started to cover these events more frequently and to share their experience as victims due to the journalistic activity. The damage caused by this exposure, according to Ogunyemi & Akanuwe (2021) is evidenced in studies developed with professionals in the USA and Norway, which revealed different types of psychological effects evoked by traumatic stressors like “guilt, depression, compassion fatigue, burnout, avoidance, intrusive experiencing, increased arousal, desensitization or numbing (or sensitization), helplessness, and emotional lability including anger outbursts” (Buchanan & Keats, 2011; Ikizer et al., 2019; Seely 2020, cited by Ogunyemi & Akanuwe, 2021, p. 37).

Hill et al. (2020) cited studies by Buchanan & Keats (2011), Newman et al. (2003), and Simpson & Boggs (1999) with journalists in different media types and varied activities who experienced emotional and/or physical attacks while covering traumatic events and became vulnerable to diseases. They also referred to the literature review carried out by Feinstein et al. (2014), which reported anxiety and depression in professionals that were repeatedly exposed to traumatic images.

Despite the existence of studies indicating the deleterious effect of the activity on professionals, a consensus was not reached regarding the inclusion of such discussion in the initial education of journalists. According to Hill et al. (2020), in the USA, only 12% of the universities included subjects on trauma and journalism in their courses (Weiss, 2012), while the Spect (2018) study carried out with 61 universities in the United Kingdom pointed out that none of them prepared their students to the potential risks of the journalistic practice.

In the USA, the Dart Center, a reference institution for ethical discussion of reports of traumatic events and journalist education, published the *Trauma & Journalism. A Guide for Journalists, Editors & Managers* in 2007 (Brayane, 2007) for understanding that these professionals are in the forefront of crisis situations and disasters, and for the lack of awareness of the psychological implications involved in the activity. Apart from the instructions and recommendations aiming at the job market, Hill et al. (2020) as well as Ogunyemi and Akanuwe (2021) drew attention to the implementation of theoretical and practical knowledge about traumas in the journalistic activity in the curricula of undergraduate courses, along with resilience training,

simulations and roleplaying based on research and emphasizing the protection, wellbeing, and safety of those professionals.

This study seeks to observe the science of the discussion in journalism teaching in Brazil and Colombia and the professors' position regarding the inclusion of this theme in the learning process of the future professionals. The choice of these two South American countries is due to their susceptibility to natural disasters, crimes, social conflicts, homicides, feminicides, and urban violence, among other tragedies.

Methodology

The methodology used in the discussion follows the procedures of the Journalism Education and Trauma Research Group (JETREG). To map the perspective of professors in Journalism courses, a questionnaire with 31 questions distributed in five axes was prepared and applied by the JETREG. The first part includes questions about trauma awareness, followed by questions about attitudes towards inclusion and trauma discussion content, challenges of inclusion, reflections, and personal and demographic information. The questionnaire was translated into Portuguese (Brazil) and Spanish (Colombia) and adapted for google forms. In both countries, it was sent to networks of professors and researchers in Communication and Journalism, associations, and undergraduate and graduate programs, and the researchers contacted the direction of the associations and coordinators via email and WhatsApp. In Brazil, the application took place between July 1st and August 2nd, 2022. Meanwhile, the questionnaire was applied in Colombia between July 6th and 23rd. It was launched through WhatsApp Groups to professors of Journalism from the Faculties of Social Communication of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana– and the Universidad Santo Tomás (Table 1).

In Brazil, the entities involved were: the National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (Compós), the National Forum of Professors of Journalism, the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI), and the coordination of courses in the South, Southeast, Midwest, North, and Northeast, public and private faculties. Brazil has 327 undergraduate Journalism courses (Lima et al., 2022). Most courses are offered by private institutions, only 61 (18.65%) are public.

TABLE 1.
Professors' profiles

	Brazil	Colombia
Professors	37	13
Male	17	6
Female	19	7
Doctorate	30	4
Master	7	8
Graduation	-	1

Source: Own elaboration.

In Colombia, all professors are linked to private education, and they have more than ten years of experience. In Brazil, professors from public and private schools answered the web survey and twenty-eight respondents (77.8%) have been teaching journalism for more than ten years. Among Brazilian respondents, 83.3% are full-time, and 16.7% are part-time professors. It should be noted that the population of professors with doctoral training is more significant in Brazil than in Colombia.

The mandatory diploma for the exercise of Journalism in Brazil was approved in 1969. In June 2009, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) overturned it. Despite the drop in the qualification requirement for professional practice, 94.1% professionals graduated in journalism courses, out of those 60.2% studied in private institutions and 33.4% in federal institutions, 12.6% went to state universities, and 0.3% to municipal institutions, according to data from the Profile of the Brazilian Journalist Survey 2021 (Lima et al., 2022). According to that survey, there are 142,000 journalists with a Professional Registration (Lima et al., 2022). The Brazilian population in 2021 was 212.7 million (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2022).

The curriculum of undergraduate courses follows the guidelines of the Ministry of Education (MEC), which are prepared by study groups composed of researchers, professors, market professionals, and representatives of communication companies. The last update dates from 2009 (Marques De Melo et al., 2009) and does not mention the discussion about trauma.

The methodological procedures included documentary research of data and indicators on the health of journalists, attacks against professionals and freedom of the press, deaths resulting from the exercise of the profession, precariousness, and flexibility of work, violation of human rights, and risk coverage. The main source of data included UNESCO, Reporters without Borders, Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI), and National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ) reports. Other studies consulted were: *Profile Survey of Brazilian Journalists 2021* (Lima et al., 2022), *Supporting our colleagues - A guide for*

journalists and media professionals (Headlines & Mind, 2022), *Chapultepec Index de Libertad de Expresión y Prensa* (2022), and *Taking Care - A report on mental health, well-being & trauma among Canadian media workers* (2022). Regarding Colombia, the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP), Gabo Foundation, Colombian Association of Communication Faculties and Programs (Afacom), the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) (2021), and the Federación Colombiana de Periodistas (Fecolper), were all consulted.

In Colombia, pursuant to Law 30 of 1992 obtaining the journalist title is “the express recognition of character academic award, granted to a natural person, upon completion of a program, for having acquired a certain knowledge in a Higher Education Institution”. Law 51 of 1975 regulated the exercise of journalism in Colombia. However, judgment C-087 of 1998 declared the unenforceability of this Law. As a consequence, the journalists’ professional card was declared non applicable. Nevertheless, it is still strongly recommended, and almost condition *sine qua non* in some working environments, for the individual to study “Social Communication” focusing on journalism. This is because even though a special document is not required within the nation for doing the job, any given agency or media outlet will take into account the existence of prior academic training in the matter, to link up, or not, with the individual at hand.

Colombia is a country that has an estimated 50.8 million inhabitants. The training of journalists in that country is mainly carried out by private universities (95%), while only 5% is provided by public institutions (Salazar & Sepúlveda, 2011). According to the labor observatory for education, between 2015 and 2020 there were 10,933 graduates. This fact has repercussions for the news coverage in the country, to the extent that it tends to favor private interests, something the social spheres of Colombian society are progressively detecting, not only due to the influence exerted on journalists but also their marked favoritism for certain ideological or political currents. The Colombian Association of Faculties and University Programs in Communication, AFACOM, brings together 63 Communication colleges in the country.

Findings

The results are systematized according to three sets of questions.

Brazil, the first axis: About critical and potentially traumatic incidents

All professors (100%) understand that journalists experience emotional distress at work, and the majority (93.4%) indicated that they know at least one journalist who has suffered personal and/or professional reactions due to exposure to critical and potentially traumatic events in their professional practice. The virtual environment is one of the places where journalists feel exposed, and 75% of the sample agreed that most journalists are exposed to traumatic events on social media.

Professors have a good understanding of the risks that arise from exposure to critical and potentially traumatic events, which was expressed by 83.3% of the sample. And 50% felt that journalism professors understand the journalistic practice psychological cost.

Only eight professors (22.2%) knew the guidelines of the institutions where they work regarding the identification of students who present difficulties attributable to exposure to critical or potentially traumatic events. This data was confirmed with only one teacher (2.8%) receiving training on aspects of trauma and traumatic stress that are relevant for training in journalism.

Although preparing journalism students for trauma is still a distant goal at universities, 85.1% of professors believed that students need to be better trained to deal with the personal and professional impacts of exposure to critical and potentially traumatic events. Part of them, 63.8%, were also aware that some teaching materials contain traumatic content.

The second axis: Inclusion and content about trauma

Regarding the questions about the training of students and the curricularization of the discussion of traumatic coverage, the majority answered that the content of the journalism curriculum at their institution included teaching reporting with sensitivity, 63.80%. Although most respondents indicated the inclusion of sensitive reporting in the journalism curriculum of the institution where they work, 41.6% disagreed that there was awareness of the education to minimize damage to survivors and the community in journalism courses, and only 16.7% agreed that the institution included this understanding in the curriculum.

Almost all respondents agreed that the curriculum at the institutions where they work included teaching on avoiding sensationalized reporting (91.2%), and 44.4% reported that the journalism curriculum did not include role-play of interviews with victims and survivors. And more than half of them, 77.7%, said there was no inclusion of accident simulation content. Only 2.8% indicated the existence of this kind of simulation.

Less than half of teachers, 36.2%, disagreed that students are confident to interview survivors of critical and potentially traumatic events and are closer to reducing the risks of evoking more emotional distress. Only 19.4% responded to agree. However, when informing whether they received adequate guidance and/or training to teach journalism students about critical and potentially traumatic events, like the reactions such exposures can evoke, 55.6% answered no, while 7.4% reported having been trained. The answers revealed that the initial education fails to prepare future professionals for the demands they will face in any of the country's five regions, such as increasing poverty, hunger, fires, deforestation, refugee crisis, drug trafficking, and police violence, for example.

Almost all teachers, 97.2%, agreed that more attention needs to be paid to developing personal and professional resilience in journalism students for potentially high-risk situations. Only 2.8% disagreed. For the professors, the lack of specialized knowledge is the main barrier to including this content in the institution's school curriculum (93.9%). They also indicated lack of time (36.4%), reading materials (33.3%), and resources (21.2%). The barrier with the lowest indicator (12.2%) was accreditation issues. Other points raised were unfavorable institutional policy; and overly formatted curricula.

The third axis: Evoke into the journalism curriculum

More than half of the respondents (69.4%) reported that the inclusion of content represents a challenge for the education institution. For 58.5%, it is up to journalistic companies to provide this training to professionals and not to universities. Only 22.2% did not agree with this position. The question of how the journalism curriculum can incorporate trauma coverage in a meaningful way for students was addressed in an open-ended question. The professors' answers indicated the following action fronts:

a) Professors' training

Propose training activities with professors through members of the course collegiate/department, considering an essential requirement for the evaluation of the course. As well as inserting the theme "in a transversal way, throughout the entire training".

b) Subjects

The subjects indicated to work on the topic were: Ethics in Journalism, Reporting and interviewing practices, Psychology and Social Psychology, Anthropology, and Specialized Journalism.

c) Debates, classroom reflections, laboratory exercises

Promoting activities, exercises, and simulations with students when dealing with trauma should be done with a specialized and experienced professor. Special care must be taken not to leave the student vulnerable to this type of approach in the classroom.

The reflections can be based on the Brazilian political and social context, which brings a reality guided by extreme situations and traumatic events such as urban violence and natural disasters caused by the lack of public effort to prevent or mitigate tragedies.

Another approach brings the premise of the journalist's own safety in the exercise of the profession. Resulting from the political polarization environment that the country lives in, with attacks on the press and the devaluation of the professional activity.

The barriers and challenges to implementing trauma in the curriculum include curriculum guidelines, time, journalist's ideology, and dialogue with sector entities. The stiffening of the curriculum structure involves bureaucracy and lack of interest on the part of course managers so that new approaches are incorporated into the curriculum. Curriculum changes are sometimes prevented by internal education policies. Lack of knowledge on the part of coordinators and professionals, and lack of knowledge of specific materials were also items of discussion.

The market and resistance of the faculties are factors to be considered by the professors. In a public institution, the barrier involves issues of time, persuasion, and the instances this type of implementation must go through. From the private institution standpoint, the issue of the cost spreadsheet is mentioned as a way to make these strategies possible to promote courses and training. One of the difficulties reported is lack of time to bring this content to the classroom, which already has its pre-established schedule.

This journalist's ideology raised a contradiction, that is, a romantic and messianic vision of the profession and an excessively pragmatic and bureaucratic view that loses the social dimension. One hypothesis is that journalists do not see themselves inserted in traumatic situations in their coverage, as if it were something naturalized, part of their ideology and professional practice. Finally, the respondents said that undergraduate courses could establish contact with entities in the journalistic sector to offer qualification and training.

The crossing of the answers from the three axes showed that most teachers agreed that the coverage of traumatic events arouses reactions in professional journalists and that it is necessary to discuss this in the training, but not from a sensationalist bias. They defended the development of sensitivity regarding both the approach with the sources and the text construction. There was also agreement on the risks that involve the professional exposed to trauma. However, there was no consensus that the responsibility for discussing the risks to which journalists are exposed lies with undergraduate courses.

Colombia, the first axis: About critical and potentially traumatic incidents

The survey is a common instrument in both countries, and was applied in Colombia with questions focused on the subject of training in the face of traumatic risks due to journalistic coverage. In general, there was a clear understanding of the risks and threats to journalists. What is interesting is that the interviewees proposed different forms of understanding, beyond what one of the informants called "manualistic".

Adding up the answers, a consensus of 92.3% was observed regarding the risks involved in the journalistic practice in Colombia. For those professors, lack of specialized knowledge was the main barrier to the inclusion of this content in the institution's curriculum (93.9%). They also indicated lack of time (36.4%), reading materials (33.3%), and resources (21.2%). The barrier with the lowest indicator was accreditation issues, 12.2%.

In Colombia, good understanding of the risks arising from exposure to critical and potentially traumatic events was detected, with 38.5% of the sample stating that they totally agreed, 53.8% agreed, and only 7.7% indicated that they did not lean towards a particular position on the subject. The vast majority of teachers were fully aware that their teaching materials presented traumatic content, with 53.85% of the sample fully agreeing, 38.46% agreeing, and only 7.69% uncertain about the characteristics of their inputs.

The second axis: Inclusion and content about trauma

The consensus begins to collapse when we investigated guidelines used by the education institutions to identify students with difficulties generated by exposure to critical or traumatic events, given that only 7.69% of the sample totally agreed with the existence of such criteria. Some of those surveyed (38.46%) agreed, while 23.08% did not express their position and the last percentage was also observed for teachers who disagreed. However, 7.69% stated that they were unaware of whether there were identification guidelines or not. Despite this situation, beginning to make visible the need to prepare ourselves to generate resilience strategies and suitable training by higher education institutions can open a door for future specializations, mainly for those who cover war journalism, legal, migration and other sources such as public order and natural disasters.

The professors' feedback when asked about receiving training on aspects related to trauma and traumatic stress was obvious: only 15.38% had received specific training on the subject, while 84.62% of those surveyed indicated that they did not receive any training received the relevant training. Out of those surveyed, 61.54% stated that their peers, professors of journalism, understand the psychological cost of practicing the profession. However, 7.69% maintained a neutral position regarding the situation, and 30.77% of the sample reported lack of understanding about the mental and emotional impact that can be generated in journalists.

In view of the above, and based on the historical context of Colombia, 92.3% of those surveyed declared knowing at least one journalist who suffered adverse personal or professional issues attributable to exposure to critical and potentially traumatic events in the development of their activity, while 7.7% affirmed the opposite. On the other hand, there is unanimity about how common it is for journalists to experience emotional distress at work, with 100% of the teaching staff opting for the positive answer.

The homogeneity of the answers changes when we investigated whether journalists are exposed to traumatic events through social networks. According to 53.85% of the participants, this is a fact. However, 23.08% did not express their point of view regarding the situation, 7.69% were not sure about such exposure, and 15.38% expressed disagreement with the exposure of journalists to trauma through social networks.

The third axis: Evoke into the journalism curriculum

When the participants were asked about whether journalism students are prepared to deal with the personal and professional impact of exposure to critical and potentially traumatic events, 100% of the professors agreed that students are not prepared to deal with events of a traumatic nature. Such scenario is discouraging, given that it is about the future generation of journalists. For this reason, 69.2% of the participants highlighted that the inclusion of relevant teaching materials can help students become resistant to trauma exposure and implement tools so as not to suffer adverse reactions in the future, compared to 23.1% who did not see the introduction of these inputs as useful, and 7.7% who remained indifferent.

Over half of the sample (69.2%) indicated that the content of the journalism study plan in their respective institutions did not include simulated accidents, while 23.1% of the respondents were unaware of the existence of said activities, and 7.7% did not give a conclusive answer to that. Responses varied when the professors were asked directly about their students, specifically about whether they were able to interview survivors of critical events and potentially reduce the risks of evoking further emotional distress. Their answers showed that 23.1% considered that students had the necessary input to deal with these situations, and a similar percentage said they did not agree or disagree, while the remaining 53.9% stated that they did not believe that the students had enough tools to deal with these circumstances.

In relation to the issue discussed above, focusing on the orientation or adequate training to teach students about critical events, only 30.8% of teachers indicated having received such training, compared to 30.8% who did not choose any option, and another 38.5% who claimed not to have had the necessary instruction.

It was interesting to observe certain contrast of those results with the answers given by the professors when asked whether they considered that more attention should be paid to developing the personal and professional resilience of students for future high-risk assignments, given that it was the feeling of 92.4% of the participants these attributes should be better developed, compared to 7.7% who did not consider it necessary.

The professors agreed that the obstacles to including trauma journalism material in the curriculum are largely due, in descending order, to lack of specialized knowledge, resources, time, and reading material, but they also pointed out accreditation issues, so it follows that the problems are attributed to the structure of the academy, but not to the professors' disposition. Going further, the configuration of a particular situation was detailed, with 46.2% of the professors mentioning that it is the media rather than the universities that should provide journalists with training in trauma. Only 15.4% maintained a position of neutrality regarding what was proposed, as opposed to 38.5% who believed that training should be provided by universities.

Discussion and conclusions

News coverage involving trauma is part of journalists' job and requires the knowledge, sensitivity, and abilities to obtain information with ethics, responsibility, and care towards the sources related to the event. There is also the issue of the professional experiencing the traumatic event. When professionals investigate and tell stories involving violence or tragedy or do journalistic coverage in the field, they are subject to conditions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In addition to telling the stories in detail and reliving tragedies, Brazilian and Colombian journalists are attacked during their professional practice, which makes them more susceptible to physical and psychological diseases. Such exposure to risks and traumas when doing the job is a consensus among the professors that answered the questionnaires. Mapping provided by entities that represent this professional group (UNESCO, Reporters without Borders, ABRAJI, FENAJ, Press Freedom, Gabo Foundation) pointed out at least three variables in Brazil and Colombia that can trigger traumas in journalists: i) gender attacks, ii) coverage of human rights violations, and iii) the attacks against press freedom and journalists.

This discussion suggests that these issues should be inserted in studies on trauma and resilient practices in university courses and in reflections upon the professional activity of Brazilian and Colombian journalists.

Gender Attacks

In 2021, on average, every three days there was an attack against women journalists in Brazil. The data comes from the monitoring carried out by the Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (ABRAJI) in partnership with UNESCO (Associação Brasileira de Jornalismo Investigativo [Abraji], 2022). Another significant fact is that political coverage generated more attacks, especially on gender and against women journalists, and state agents were the main identifiable perpetrators of the attacks.

In Brazil, women journalists are the main victims of cyberattacks, mostly of a sexist and violent nature. These attacks have a peculiar characteristic, with regards to women in their personal life and with name-calling (Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas [FENAJ], 2022).

Gender asymmetries impact female professionals, as revealed by the research carried out by the The International Federation of Journalists (2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, with 1308 respondents, out of which 42% were women from 77 countries. In that study, women experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety than their male colleagues.

Coverage of human rights violations

In Brazil, the activity and expansion of criminal organizations are the subjects of investigative reports. An emblematic case is that of journalist Tim Lopes murdered while reporting on child abuse and drug trafficking in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro city 20 years ago.

The Brazilian political and social contexts promote this reality guided by extreme situations and traumatic events such as urban violence and natural disasters, which are worsened by the absence of the public power that should prevent or mitigate such tragedies. Regarding Colombia, the country has regularly been among the top three most violent countries in Latin America and in 2015, according to the Global Peace Index, was the 11th most violent country in the world. "Colombia has over 5.7 million internally displaced people, therefore making it second only to Sudan in terms of population displacement" (Doyle, 2016).

The attack on press freedom and journalists

About 85% of the world population lived in countries with declining press freedom in the last five years, according to UNESCO Representative in Brazil, Marlova Jovchelovitch Noleto (Noleto, 2022, s. p.). Since 2013, ABRAJI has been monitoring attacks on journalists and reported that from 2019 to 2020, the occurrences increased by 182.3%, and from 2020 to 2021, the increase was 23.4%. Brazil is among the most insecure countries in Latin America for this professional activity (Abraji, 2022). The most recent case was the deaths on June 5th of British reporter Dom Philips and indigenist Bruno Pereira while reporting on illegal activities in the Amazon rainforest and against indigenous peoples.

Reporters and editors working in Brazil are exposed to threats and aggression: 145 cases of non-lethal violence were recorded with professionals in the area only in 2021, according to a survey by the Brazilian Association of Radio and TV Broadcasters (Abert) (2021, p. 13).

The continuity of press freedom violations in Brazil is associated with the rise of Jair Bolsonaro to the Presidency of the Republic. The Violence against journalists and freedom of the press in Brazil report shows in 2019, the number of cases of attacks on media outlets and journalists reached 208, a 54.07% increase when compared to 2018 (Fenaj, 2022).

According to a Fecolper (Colombian Federation of Journalists) report, in Colombia, the most common practices to stop, balk or limit press freedom in 2017 were threats (30.4%), followed by physical attacks (10.7%), and obstruction of journalistic work (9%). This adverse context has affected Colombians' mental health, and journalists are no exception. Another relevant phenomenon in the matter is the fact that they had to go into exile abroad, as a result of threats for denouncing acts of corruption and violence in Colombia (Cano, 2003, p. 122).

The report "Journalism is a public good", published by Unesco (2021), estimates that between 2016 and 2020, 14 journalists were murdered in Brazil. The country occupies the tenth position in the ranking of nations with the most murders among media professionals.

In Colombia, from 1977 to 2015, 152 journalists were killed for doing their job. Most of them worked in small radio stations and regional newspapers, and their commitment to the job was dedicated to investigating and denouncing acts of corruption or events of the armed conflict that were experienced in different areas of the country (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica [CNMH], 2020). According to the type of violence, various figures are reported on the murders of journalists, as per information obtained from The National Center for Historical Memory. The fear of being assassinated has unleashed a phenomenon called the *silenced municipalities*, by Press Freedom Foundation (Fundación para la libertad de prensa [FLIP]). Ninety-seven media outlets and journalists have been threatened so far in 2022 (FLIP, 2022).

Brazil is a much larger country than Colombia not only in territory but also in population. In that sense they are not comparable by proportions. However, we dedicated some time to find common elements in relation to the training of journalists who require preparation for issues related to resilience capacity and management strategies in situations that can generate moral stress in the exercise of their profession.

The main recommendations published in 2021 in Colombia suggest that journalists must learn to identify post-traumatic stress and seek professional help. These suggestions were put forward by Olivia James (Asociación Colombiana de Medios de Información [AMI], 2021).

The fact that in Colombia and Brazil most journalism schools are private results in avoidance to talk about the risks of trauma situations that the profession entails, since it could affect the demand of young people who wish to train for this job, and greatly impact the already scattered class offer and distribution within the curriculum.

Regarding whether the curricula planned the creation of awareness on how to minimize the damage to the survivors and the community in the exercise of the journalistic activity, only 30.8% stated that they agreed with this premise. There were 15.4% who were indifferent, while 38.5% disagreed with said function of the study plans, and 15.4% did not know if the content included such task or not. The respondents' opinions were somehow more homogeneous in the category of teaching how to avoid sensational reports, given that 84.6% of the faculty agreed that this was one of the approaches of the colleges associated with the profession. The remaining 15.4% was distributed, in equal parts, between professors whose feeling was that the educational criteria did not seek to avoid sensationalism and those who could not tangibly identify the mentioned assumptions.

When the topic of victims was approached, the participants were asked whether the content of the journalism curriculum at the various institutions includes role-playing interviews with victims and survivors. Their answers showed that 38.5% of the sample indicated that these activities were contemplated and promoted within the courses, with 23.1% of the professors not agreeing or disagreeing. The same percentage of respondents stated that they did not know, and the remaining percentage (15.4%) showed disagreement with the existence of these exercises. Both the investigators and professors considered that the coverage of trauma could be incorporated into journalism through elements such as stress prevention strategies and role play, workshops and exercises to approach journalistic practice with victims and tragedies, seminars and conferences, resources and subjects. These could be included as a part of the studies on journalism in contexts of violence, violation of rights and tragedies or as a part of the strategies of investigation, method, or analysis of cases. Some practice in covering trauma with the accompaniment of their professors and generating sensitivity about the importance of the subject for the journalistic activity should also be included. All these aspects should be thought from otherness, action without harm, communication, and systemic intervention capable of working with the management of emotions.

South America is a vast region with immense investigative potential oriented towards the research on trauma journalism. The investigation field is not only due to the unique political, social, economic, and social factors of the many countries that form the continent, but also because of distinct factors that can be intuited as byproducts of a continental background of colonization and oppression. Given the diversity of its countries, it is worth encouraging researchers in the field to continue deepening research with data related with trauma literacy training in the coming decades. This research intends to be both an invitation and a provocation for colleagues in Brazil and Colombia, allowing them to delve further in our journalistic patterns and ways of life, tailored to the specific needs of the profession.

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Notes

* Artículo de investigación.

1 This study was conducted in the context of the Journalism Education and Trauma Research Group (JETREG), an international research network of scholars from all continents. JETREG is based at the University of Lincoln and the convener is Ola Ogunyemi and the co-convener is Lada Price (JETREG, n/d).

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How to cite: Rocha, P. M., Zauith, G. y Manrique-Villanueva, L. M. P. (2024). Threats to Journalism Practice in South America Due to Lack of Trauma Literacy in Professional Training: Results of a Survey in Brazil and Colombia. *Signo y Pensamiento*, 43. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.syp43.tjps>