

Organizational Contexts of Violence Against the Press: Comparing the Recurrence of Attacks on Journalists in Mexico

Contextos organizacionales de la violencia contra la prensa: estudio comparativo de la recurrencia de agresiones a periodistas en México

Contextos organizacionais de violência contra a imprensa: estudo comparativo da recorrência de ataques a jornalistas no México

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2025.8888>

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Research on violence against journalists in Mexico has highlighted characteristics that increase the risk of attacks. Nevertheless, there are gaps that need attention. Through surveys of journalists in Mexico and analyzing 18 types of aggressions, this study reveals the most common attacks, their relationship with the organizational conditions of the media outlets they work for, and the organizational variables with the greatest impact on aggression.

KEYWORDS: Violence, press, journalism, labor conditions, organizational conditions, Mexico.

Los estudios sobre violencia contra periodistas en México han perfilado características que incrementan el riesgo de sufrir ataques. Sin embargo, existen vacíos que requieren exploración. A partir de encuestas a periodistas en México y considerando 18 variantes de agresiones, se muestra cuáles son los ataques más frecuentes, cómo se relacionan con las condiciones organizacionales de los medios para los que trabajan y cuáles son las variables organizativas con más impacto sobre las agresiones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Violencia, prensa, periodismo, condiciones laborales, condiciones organizacionales, México.

Estudos sobre a violência contra jornalistas no México delinearão características que aumentam o risco de sofrer ataques. No entanto, existem lacunas que requerem exploração. Com base em pesquisas com jornalistas no México e considerando 18 variantes de ataques, mostra quais são os ataques mais frequentes, como estão relacionados com as condições organizacionais dos meios de comunicação para os quais trabalham; e quais são as variáveis organizacionais com maior impacto nos ataques.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Violência, imprensa, jornalismo, condições de trabalho, condições organizacionais, México.

How to cite:

Márquez-Ramírez, M., Salazar Rebolledo, G., González Macías, R. A., Buxadé, J., Rodelo Amezcua, F. V., del Palacio Montiel, C., Gutiérrez Ortega, A. & Echeverría Victoria, M. (2025). Organizational Contexts of Violence Against the Press: Comparing the Recurrence of Attacks on Journalists in Mexico. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, e8888. <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2025.8888>

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Submitted: 07/31/24. Accepted: 10/23/24. Published: 02/26/25.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, studies aiming to understand violence against journalists in Mexico have increased alongside the rise in the recurrence of attacks. While it is widely agreed that this is a multifactorial phenomenon (Brambila & Hughes, 2019; González & González, 2023; Márquez, 2023), few academic studies simultaneously address and measure both the recurrence of attacks and the various types of aggression affecting journalists. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies that determine risk recurrence based on specific organizational characteristics of media outlets that may exacerbate the risk.

Violence against the press is often attributed to sociopolitical contexts, which tend to receive more attention. At the macro level, studies have shown that autocratic or hybrid regimes, particularly at the local level, create conditions that increase the risk for the exercise of free journalism (Asal et al., 2016). Other factors include criminal rivalries (Holland & Rios, 2017), weak States (Waisbord, 2007), the prevalence of impunity (Ávila, 2017), internal conflict, higher rates of human rights violations in subnational enclaves (Brambila, 2017), populist leadership (Lugo Ocando & García, 2015; Mazzoleni, 2008), and weak civil society organizations (González & Reyna, 2019; Salazar, 2022). These factors have all been cited as causes of violence against journalists. At the micro level, it has been observed that journalists who are most at risk are those who work for multiple outlets, operate locally, and work under precarious conditions (Del Palacio, 2015; González & Cepeda, 2021). A combination of sociopolitical factors and critical professional profiles are also predictors of recurring threats against the press (Hughes & Márquez, 2018).

Thus, there seems to be consensus in the literature that regional journalists who work in precarious conditions, have unstable contracts, occupy lower positions in the organizational hierarchy, or cover sensitive topics are the most frequent victims of violence (Del Palacio, 2023; González, 2020; González de Bustamante & Relly, 2021). However, while these journalists are often victims of the most extreme forms of violence, this profile has not been corroborated or comparatively analyzed across various forms of aggression. The

incidence of attacks on journalists from local media outlets has not been systematically compared to the violence experienced by journalists from national outlets, especially in light of public stigmatization of national and international media during Andrés Manuel López Obrador's administration (Signa_Lab, 2022).

Although violence against journalists has become more complex, organizational factors –such as the reach of the media outlet, type of ownership, or the medium through which journalists report– require greater attention. Organizational conditions are crucial not only for enabling journalists to fulfill their roles more effectively but also for ensuring their safety and mitigating risks, especially in repressive environments where media support becomes essential for journalists' well-being. However, the literature addressing media organizations' characteristics often progresses independently from studies on violence against the press.

Mexico's status as one of the most dangerous countries for practicing journalism, combined with a wide range of organizational conditions, justifies its selection as a case study. While murders are the most visible aspect of this risk environment (Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023), it is essential to consider the broad spectrum of attacks that threaten journalists' safety. Some attacks are more closely related than others to specific organizational profiles. This research aims to identify the most frequent attacks journalists face in Mexico and analyze the impact of organizational conditions on exacerbating these risks.

Based on a representative survey of 443 Mexican journalists, we examine 18 types of attacks, including demeaning or hateful speech, public discrediting of work, questioning moral principles, threats, workplace harassment, surveillance or espionage, stalking, hacking, dissemination of personal information, identity theft, legal actions, office break-ins, sexual harassment or assault, coercion, physical attacks, arrests, family intimidation, and kidnapping. Statistical analyses were conducted to address the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the most frequent attacks on journalists in Mexico?

RQ2: Which organizational characteristics are statistically related to attacks on journalists in Mexico?

RQ3: Which organizational characteristics have the greatest impact on the different types of attacks considered?

Our findings indicate that organizational conditions –understood in this paper as the reach of the media outlet, the type of media platform for which the journalist works, the type of ownership of the media outlet, and the journalist’s position within the organizational hierarchy and decision-making processes– significantly impact journalists’ safety.

On the one hand, attacks aimed at journalists’ emotional well-being, such as hate speech or public stigmatization of their work, are the most recurrent nationwide. On the other hand, journalists facing the highest risks are those with significant decision-making power, predominantly in regional media outlets, and those who work across various media platforms. We also find that those working for community media are more exposed to specific attacks. Additionally, we demonstrate that some forms of violence are cross-cutting all organizational profiles, while other types are more targeted towards specific ones. This shows that violence manifests differently across organizational hierarchies, ownership types, and media reach.

This paper is structured as follows: first, we provide context on the approaches generated in the literature regarding violence against journalists, highlighting gaps and limitations. Next, we develop our research questions and present the survey methodology underpinning this article. In the subsequent section, we conduct statistical analyses to answer the research questions, and finally, we discuss the findings and present conclusions.

ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS: A BRIEF CONTEXT

The majority of literature on risks and threats to the safety of journalists has focused on understanding the most extreme forms of violence, such as murders or physical attacks. However, this emphasis has overlooked the broad spectrum of everyday attacks that journalists face, which are less visible and often normalized as part of a profession inherently marked by risk (Mosdell, 2016).

Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. (2023, p. 14) present a classification of the different attacks affecting journalists’ safety, considering four

dimensions of risk. The first is physical, encompassing elements that impact bodily integrity, such as beatings, arrests, kidnappings, and torture. The second is psychological, affecting mental and emotional well-being through intimidation, coercion, threats, dissemination of personal information, verbal abuse, and hate speech. The third dimension is digital, threatening digital self-determination and freedom in the online environment, including security breaches, hacking, and content blocking. Finally, the financial dimension refers to impacts on journalists' professional livelihoods, including obstacles to job stability and conditionality of wages, among others.

Thus, the narrative that insecurity, impunity, and violence have made Mexico the most dangerous country for journalism helps to understand the most extreme form of violence –murders–, but does not necessarily address the other, more frequent, everyday attacks experienced differently by journalists depending on their organizational characteristics (Márquez, 2023).

Literature review: the importance of organizational factors

Violence against journalists in Mexico has been addressed from various perspectives. Studies exploring risk-predictive factors, such as those by Hughes and Márquez (2018) and Brambila (2017), conclude that violent environments are associated with greater threats to journalists, corrupt local governments, police forces, contexts of insecurity and human rights violations, and adopting a watchdog role increase the likelihood of threats. These studies emphasize the need to consider subnational differences to understand the dynamics of threats against journalists.

From a similar approach, Salazar (2019, 2022) demonstrates that different forms of governmental control over the press, including physical violence against journalists, are related to the absence of political and social counterweights that might provide support networks for assaulted journalists or responses to protest and denunciation. Meanwhile, Del Palacio (2023) argues that violence against journalists should be understood through the lens of multiple inequalities and the unequal distribution of risk. This risk is shaped spatially and territorially, with the most significant factors being disputes between cartels and their relationships with authorities and media professionals.

In studies profiling risk conditions, González de Bustamante and Relly (2021) find that journalists working in peripheral areas are the most exposed to violence, job insecurity, and corruption. Despite these adverse conditions, some journalists have developed resistance (rejection of actors limiting their work) and resilience strategies (professionalization efforts and collective formation) to cope with their environments (Ramos Rojas, 2024).

Del Palacio (2018), in a research based on in-depth interviews and a review of bibliographic and journalistic sources, highlights the types of violence faced by journalists in Veracruz, connecting it to the concept of “subnational authoritarianism” (Gibson, 2012). This concept helps to explain why Veracruz experienced a higher number of journalist murders and attacks during Javier Duarte’s authoritarian government. Through semi-structured interviews, Díaz-Cerveró et al. (2022) find that journalists covering organized crime face greater pressures and restrictions, including violence. These authors note that, at the extra-media level, cartels exert pressure on media outlets to prevent coverage of their activities or to attack rivals. Government authorities and businesspeople linked to organized crime also play a role in exerting pressure. The study finds that although no journalist or media outlet is exempt from attacks, those operating in rural areas and freelancers are the most vulnerable. This qualitative finding aligns with those of González de Bustamante and Relly (2021) and Del Palacio (2023).

González and González (2023) identify a dual challenge that journalists face in Mexico: internal and external factors combine to make it the most violent country for journalism. Internal factors include adopting a watchdog role and exposing corruption, while external factors are tied to the political system’s characteristics, such as structural violence, clientelism, and impunity, which incentivize aggression. In Mexico, journalists not only face the inherent risks of their profession, but also contend with an environment of impunity and the absence of the rule of law.

Finally, Rodelo (2023), through records of layoffs and media closures, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of social media posts, finds that newsroom restructuring can contribute to labor precarity, a form of structural violence against the press. This is one of the few

studies considering organizational elements in the analysis of risks faced by the press.

Although studies have shown that precariousness or organizational pressures increase journalists' risk –and thus their likelihood of suffering attacks– a comparative exploration of the specific conditions of media type or journalists' organizational roles that exacerbate vulnerability remains lacking. Evidence suggests that journalists with precarious employment arrangements (e.g., freelancers), reporters in lower ranks, and those working for regional outlets are more exposed to risk. However, systematic evidence from a comparative analysis of journalists nationwide is needed to confirm these intuitions. It is within this gap in the literature that this research is positioned.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What are the most frequent attacks on journalists in Mexico?

RQ2: Which organizational characteristics are statistically related to the various types of attacks against journalists in Mexico? Organizational characteristics include journalists' rank, media reach, media platform, and media ownership.

RQ3: Which organizational characteristics have the greatest impact on the different types of attacks considered?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted collaboratively by a consortium of researchers who applied the international Worlds of Journalism survey in Mexico between November 2021 and November 2022. Adhering to the methodological guidelines established by the global consortium, the sample design and instrument were replicated in all participating countries.

Media sampling method

To ensure the representativeness of the national media system in terms of reach, media orientation, ownership type, platform type, and regional distribution –and given the lack of a reliable and comprehensive directory of media outlets or an updated census of journalists– the team

developed its own directory (González et al., 2023). First, for sample stratification, six regions were created based on geographic contiguity and national security regions (Mexico City and the metropolitan area, Center, West, Northeast, Northwest, and Southeast), according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) records. This approach accounts for the importance of regional variations in journalistic culture and each region's levels and degrees of insecurity (Brambila, 2017; Del Palacio & Olvera, 2017; Salazar, 2022).

In order to integrate the sampling framework of four types of media within these regions (TV, radio, press, and online), the journalistic activity of the listed media outlets was tracked through their social media accounts on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram. Once located, these accounts were verified under the following three criteria: they must publish original news (not just external information), provide recent and updated news (not inactive accounts), and maintain their own website and/or demonstrate consistent activity on platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram. The sample was supplemented with information from the National Media Registry, the Sembramedia database, the National Electoral Institute's media registry, and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters' records.

Using a stratified random sampling as a strategy to construct the media sample, organizations were selected from each region. Stratification was based on media type and reach. The number of media outlets selected in each region was calculated as the proportion of media outlets in that region relative to the total number of national media outlets.⁹

⁹ To construct the stratified sample, a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error was established, which led us to a minimum of 380 surveys, following the general formula $n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2}$ where n is the sample size, z is the critical value for a 95% confidence level, p is the estimated proportion, and e is the accepted margin of error. Subsequently, to achieve regional representativeness, each of the six regions was weighted based on the proportion of national media outlets they have, according to the media directory constructed. Thus, in the Mexico City region, which accounts for 71.1% of the total national media outlets, 108 surveys were conducted; in the Central region (10.9%), 70 surveys were conducted; in the Western region (8%), 69 surveys were conducted; in the Southeastern region (6.7%), 68 surveys

After defining the number and proportion of outlets whose journalists would be surveyed, five journalists from largely influential media outlets, up to three from moderately-influential media outlets, and one from minimally influential outlets¹⁰ were interviewed, aiming for maximum variation in terms of professional profile, rank, and gender. With a response rate of 55%, the survey concluded with a sample of N=443 journalists interviewed, with a margin of error of +/-5 and a confidence level of 95%.

Instrument

The questionnaire, developed by the global consortium, included validated questions on professional roles, perception of autonomy, ethical and epistemological orientations, or perception of influence on their work. A specific section addressed experiences of aggression resulting from journalistic work, and its consequences.

VARIABLES

Dependent variable: attacks against journalists

The dependent variable is violence against journalists, operationalized through the recurrence of 18 distinct types of attacks assessed using the following question:

were conducted; in the Northeastern region (2.9%), 65 surveys were conducted; and in the Northwestern region (1%), 63 surveys were conducted, for a national total of 443 interviews. Given the high concentration of media outlets in Mexico City, the sampling design aimed to adequately represent the different regions without over-representing Mexico City. These proportions were reflected in the number of interviews conducted by type and size of media outlet. For highly relevant outlets, a maximum of five surveys were conducted; for moderately relevant outlets, a maximum of three; and for low-relevance outlets, one interview was conducted.

¹⁰ The influence of the media outlets that were listed in the directory was determined with the advice of local experts that acted as regional consultants, academics and prestigious journalists, considering factors such as the size of the editorial staff, human and financial resources, influence on the public agenda, prestige, and historical recognition.

In the last five years, how often have you experienced any of the following actions related to your work as a journalist (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently, 5=Very frequently).

Independent variables: organizational characteristics

We considered four organizational characteristics as independent variables. These variables describe the organizational contexts in which the surveyed journalists (N=443) operate. The data were collected through the questionnaire or were filled in by interviewers using the media directory and field manual, later verified by the respondent:

- a. *Journalist's rank in the editorial hierarchy*: low (no operational or strategic decision-making power, 44.9% of the sample), medium (operational decision-making power, 31.4% of the sample), and high (strategic decision-making power, 23.7% of the sample).
- b. *Outlet reach*: local media (26% of the sample), regional media (46.7%), national media (21.4%), and transnational media (5.4%).
- c. *Outlet platform*: print newspaper (27.2% of the sample), magazine (3.6%), television (15.2%), radio (19%), news agency (3.4%), digital-native platform (20.9%), social media (4.8%), multimedia within the same media outlet (3.6%), and various media with different platforms (2.3%).
- d. *Outlet ownership*: private/commercial (89.6% of the sample), public (4.7%), state-owned (1.4%), community-owned (2.5%), and other (1.8%).

Other independent variables, such as the journalist's location in specific regions of the country or their gender, were rendered statistically significant in influencing victimization for some attacks (see descriptive statistics and significance tests in the Appendices). However, these variables were excluded from the analysis, as this paper focuses on the institutional context related to risk factors associated with media organizational characteristics.

ANALYSIS STRATEGY

To answer RQ1 regarding the frequency of attacks, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to identify the recurrence among respondents who reported experiencing frequent and very frequent attacks. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the 18 types of attacks considered.

To address RQ2, which examines the relationship between outlet's organizational characteristics and attacks against journalists, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for each attack and independent variable, along with statistical significance testing.

Finally, to answer RQ3, concerning the magnitude of the impact of organizational characteristics, the effect sizes for each dependent variable were recorded and compared across independent variables to determine which variable contributed the most variance to each type of attack.

FINDINGS

Frequency of attacks

Violence against journalists is heterogeneous, and its incidence depends on the specific type of attack (RQ1). The five most frequent attacks faced by journalists in Mexico over the past five years primarily targeted their moral integrity and reputation. These include insults or hate speech ($M=2.56$, $SD=1.16$), followed by public discrediting of their journalistic work ($M=2.32$, $SD=1.23$) and questioning of their moral principles ($M=2.00$, $SD=1.18$). More intimidating tactics, such as surveillance or espionage ($M=1.98$, $SD=1.21$) and direct threats ($M=1.81$, $SD=1.03$) followed. High standard deviations for these attacks suggest that experiences vary significantly, indicating that some journalists are more frequently victimized, while others are not affected.

At the other end of the spectrum, the least frequent attacks were kidnappings ($M=1.04$, $SD=0.25$), followed by arrests or detentions ($M=1.11$, $SD=0.43$) and office break-ins or equipment confiscations ($M=1.23$, $SD=0.60$). Legal actions stemming from journalistic work ($M=1.27$, $SD=0.70$) and family intimidation ($M=1.19$,

SD=0.66) were also among the least common. Lower standard deviations for these less frequent attacks suggest greater consensus among respondents, indicating they are universally rare.

Associations between organizational characteristics and violence against journalists

Regarding RQ2, we found the following statistically significant associations between attacks and organizational characteristics.

Variations by journalist's rank. Decision-making power (rank) within an organization is one of the most influential variables differentiating violence against journalists. Results show that 12 attacks out of the 18 had statistically significant differences among journalists of different ranks. High-ranking journalists –those with strategic decision-making power– reported higher levels of recurrence for 12 types of attacks compared to mid-level journalists (operational decision-making power) and low-ranking journalists (no operational or strategic decision-making power).

The attack most strongly influenced by rank was hacking or blocking websites or social media, which exhibited the most statistically significant differences among all attacks and the highest effect size in the study ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.094$). High-ranking journalists were disproportionately affected by this attack compared to their mid- and low-ranking counterparts.

Other attacks frequently affecting high-ranking journalists include stalking or persistent harassment ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.057$), surveillance or espionage ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.045$), legal actions stemming from journalistic work ($p < 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.036$), direct threats or intimidation ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.033$), family intimidation ($p < 0.000$, $\eta^2 = 0.030$), and name usurpation to manipulate news ($p < 0.005$, $\eta^2 = 0.027$).

Less frequent but still statistically significant attacks against high-ranking journalists include insults or hate speech ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.022$), public discrediting of their work ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.017$), questioning of moral principles ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.016$), dissemination of personal information ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$), and coercion ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.014$).

Although differences were not statistically significant across ranks, indications suggest that arrests and office break-ins may also affect high-ranking journalists more frequently. Conversely, workplace harassment and sexual harassment tend to affect mid- and low-ranking journalists predominantly.

Variations by outlet reach. Journalists working for regional media reported the highest incidence of victimization compared to those working for local, national, or transnational media outlets.

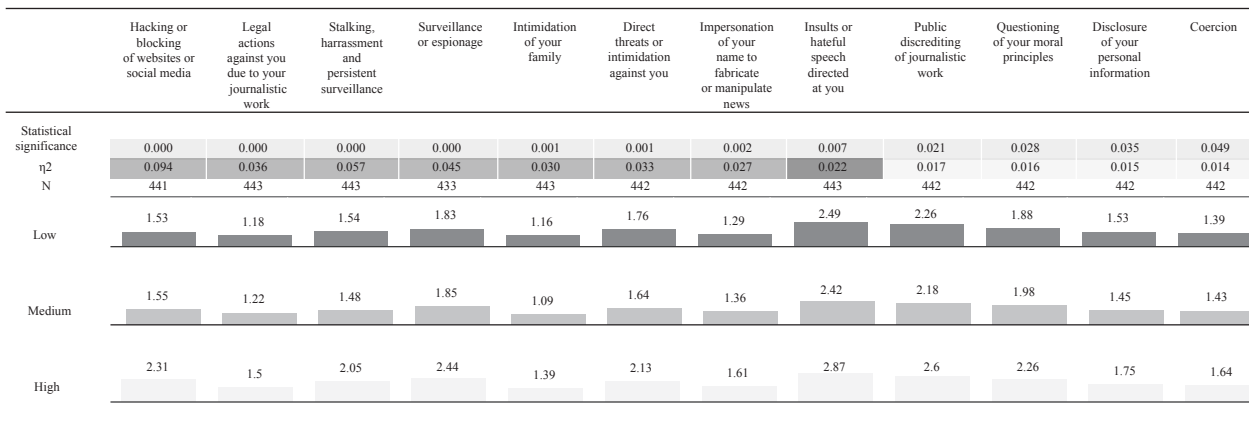
The most significant attack affecting regional media journalists was name usurpation to manipulate news ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.060$). Other statistically significant attacks, albeit with smaller effect sizes, included legal actions against journalists ($p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.038$), surveillance or espionage ($p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.035$), and direct threats or intimidation ($p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.035$).

Additional attacks that disproportionately affected regional media journalists include hacking or blocking of websites ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.034$), stalking or harassment ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.031$), coercion ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.031$), other physical attacks ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.027$), office break-ins or equipment confiscation ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.026$), and dissemination of personal information ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.025$).

These findings indicate that working for regional media amplifies nearly all types of risks, while journalists from national and transnational media are significantly less vulnerable. This corroborates existing literature on the heightened vulnerability of regional journalism in Mexico (Del Palacio, 2015) and the lower prevalence of violence against the national press, even amidst rising hate speech and public stigmatization.

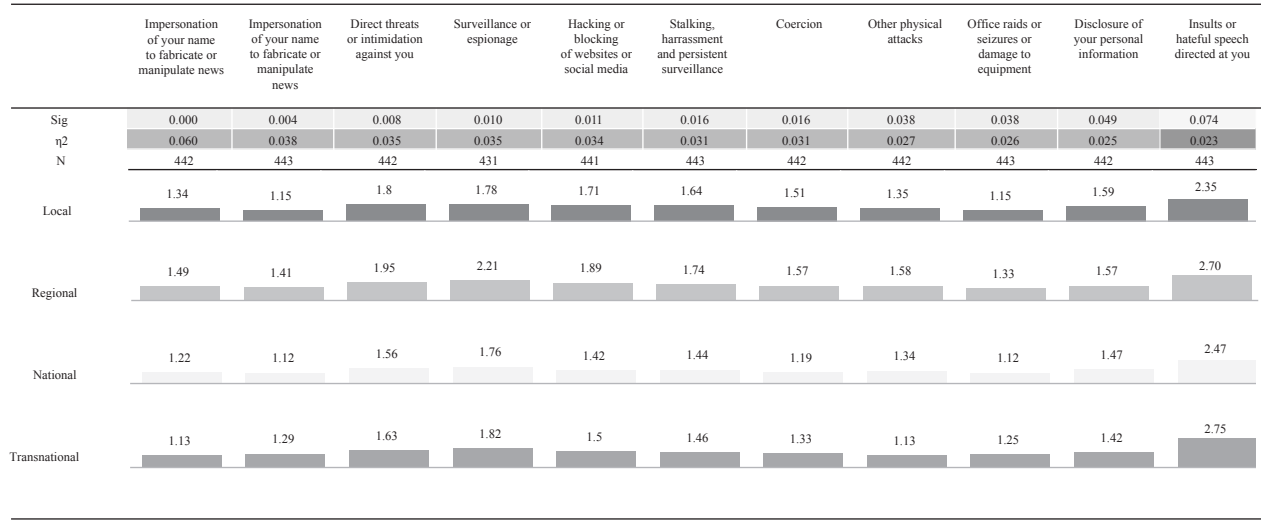
Variations by media platform. The primary platform of transmission of the media outlet is less strongly associated with variations in attack recurrence, with significant relationships found for only four types of attacks: physical attacks ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.063$), threats or intimidation ($p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.062$), hacking ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.035$), and arrests ($p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.037$).

FIGURE 1
 SIGNIFICANT ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ATTACKS AND JOURNALIST RANK



Source: The authors based on means, analysis of variance, and effect size (η^2) for the frequency of attacks (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently, 5=Very Frequently) and the variable Journalist Rank: 1=Low (no operational or strategic decision-making power), 2=Medium (operational decision-making power), 3=High (strategic decision-making power). Significance values: $p \leq 0.001$, $p \leq 0.01$, and $p \leq 0.05$.

FIGURE 2
SIGNIFICANT ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ATTACKS AND MEDIA REACH



Source: The authors based on means, analysis of variance, and effect size (η^2) for the frequency of attacks (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently, 5=Very Frequently) and the variable Media reach of the primary outlet where the journalist works: 1=Local, 2=Regional, 3=National, 4=Transnational. Significance values: $p \leq 0.001$, $p \leq 0.01$, and $p \leq 0.05$.

Journalists working across multiple platforms were the most affected by physical attacks and threats. Arrests were more common among journalists working for social media outlets and news agencies than those from other outlets, while hacking disproportionately affects those working across multiple platforms. High standard deviations suggest that hacking cases are very particular but primarily impact journalists in multi-platform roles, followed by those working in social media. These findings highlight that precarious working conditions, such as employment across multiple platforms, may pose latent risks to journalists' physical safety.

Variations in attacks by media ownership. Findings indicate that the type of ownership of the primary media outlet where journalists work does not significantly influence the frequency of attacks. This suggests that attacks are cross-cutting and affect journalists in public, private, State-owned, and community media outlets alike. The only exception is hacking, which is significantly associated with community media ($p \leq 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.024$), highlighting the potential fragility of digital security in this type of media.

While no statistically significant differences were observed between private, public, and State-owned media outlets, indications suggest that community media are more vulnerable to stalking, threats and intimidation, sexual assault, and the dissemination of personal information.

Although not statistically different from their counterparts, journalists working for private outlets appear to be more prone to experiencing hate speech, public discrediting of their work, physical attacks, name usurpation, office break-ins or equipment confiscations, and coercion. Similarly, journalists in public outlets tend to face slightly higher levels of coercion and workplace harassment. Meanwhile, those who work for State-owned outlets are generally less likely to experience violence, except for surveillance or espionage, where they report slightly higher recurrence.

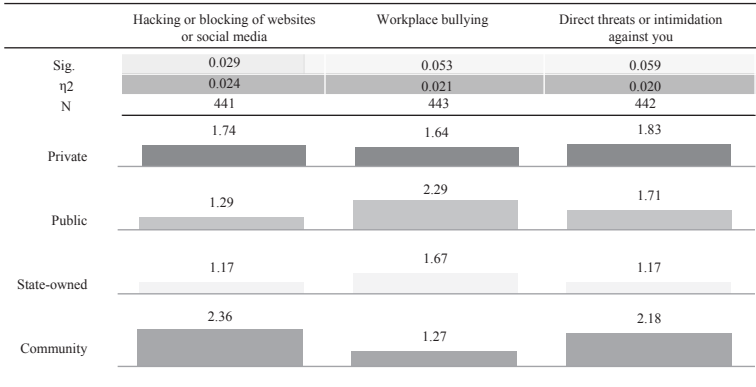
Combined effect sizes of organizational characteristics. Regarding RQ3, which examines the effect size (η^2) of organizational characteristics on

FIGURE 3
SIGNIFICANT ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ATTACKS AND MEDIA PLATFORM

	Other physical attacks	Direct threats or intimidation against you	Arrests, detentions or imprisonment	Hacking or blocking of websites or social media	Stalking, harassment and persistent surveillance	Abduction
Sig.	0.000	0.001	0.038	0.050	0.096	0.107
η^2	0.063	0.062	0.037	0.035	0.031	0.030
N	440	440	441	439	441	440
Newspaper	1.3	1.8	1.1	1.7	1.7	1.1
Magazine	1.4	1.2	1.0	1.6	1.1	1.0
Television	1.7	2.1	1.2	1.7	1.6	1.0
Radio	1.3	1.6	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.0
News agency	1.4	2.3	1.2	1.5	1.9	1.0
Digital native	1.4	1.9	1.0	2.0	1.7	1.1
Social media	1.4	1.9	1.0	2.0	1.7	1.1
Other or multiple	1.4	1.8	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.0
Various media	2.5	2.6	1.1	2.1	2.3	1.2

Source: The authors based on means, analysis of variance, and effect size (η^2) for attack frequency (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently, 5=Very Frequently). This is linked to the survey question: “How would you describe the primary activity of your main employer or the media outlet where you work most extensively?” Categories include: 1=Newspaper, 2=Magazine, 3=TV, 4=Radio, 5=News agency, 6=Digital-native platform, 7=Social media, 8=Other (multimedia), 9=Various media and platforms. Significance values: $p \leq 0.001$, $p \leq 0.01$, and $p \leq 0.05$.

FIGURE 4
 SIGNIFICANT ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ATTACKS AND MEDIA OWNERSHIP



Source: The authors based on means, analysis of variance, and effect size (η^2) for attack frequency (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Frequently, 5=Very frequently). Ownership categories include: 1=Private, 2=Public, 3=State-owned, 4=Community, 5=Other. Significance values: $p \leq 0.001$, $p \leq 0.01$, and $p \leq 0.05$.

the likelihood of experiencing attacks, results show that the impact of organizational variables on violence against the press is not uniform. The higher the rank of the journalist, the greater the effect size on attacks such as website blocking and stalking, while outlet's reach had the most decisive influence on the likelihood of regional journalists experiencing the use of bylines for fabricated or manipulated stories. Media platform (or multi-platform employment) had the largest effect size on threats and physical attacks, while community media ownership showed a strong effect on hacking and website blocking.

In terms of the comparative weight of organizational variables on specific attacks, hate speech and public discrediting were most influenced by regional media reach and high journalist rank. Surveillance, stalking, and hacking were determined by high rank, while coercion, legal actions, office break-ins, arrests, use of byline, and dissemination of personal data were more influenced by regional reach. Arrests, threats,

kidnappings, and other physical attacks were more strongly affected by the media platform journalists worked for, which also had a greater influence than other variables on the likelihood of experiencing moral questioning, family intimidation, and sexual harassment. Workplace harassment was most strongly associated with specific media platforms and ownership types.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH AGENDA

Amid the diversity of categorizations and conceptualizations of violence against the press in Mexico, this study has measured and compared the frequency with which journalists in various organizational contexts face a range of 18 types of attacks. One of the main findings is that the recurrence of violence against the press is neither generalized nor exempt from variations within specific organizational settings. Conceptual precision in distinguishing various types of attacks has allowed us to identify that assaults aimed at undermining journalists' reputations –such as insults, public discrediting, and questioning– are the most frequent. These attacks are concentrated particularly among regional journalists and those in higher-ranking positions, who tend to have greater visibility or public recognition. On the other hand, attacks that threaten journalists' physical integrity are less frequent but also tend to affect higher-ranking journalists.

This does not necessarily mean that violence primarily affects managerial levels in media organizations. Instead, the visibility of journalists who make strategic and operational decisions –even in small outlets without hierarchical editorial structures or those operating with very small teams– makes them targets for attacks. This finding nuances previous evidence suggesting that lower-ranking journalists are the most vulnerable. It highlights the importance of considering a journalist's position within their organization and, more importantly, their level of decision-making power in determining their work agenda. It is also possible that journalists with greater decision-making power have normalized certain types of attacks as part of their profession.

Consistent with Article 19 (2024) reports, our study confirms that regional media journalists suffer the highest number of attacks. The

national press remains a comparatively less risky environment for journalists, as it is the sector least affected by violence, even in cases of recurring attacks such as hate speech, questioning, or public stigmatization. Given that media reach is a decisive risk factor, studies on violence against journalists should incorporate analyses of local media systems, their normative principles, and working conditions to better explain the incidence of violence.

Regarding media type, we found that journalists working across multiple platforms are the most likely to be attacked, possibly due to precarious work arrangements. This aligns with findings from previous qualitative studies (Del Palacio, 2023; Rodelo, 2023). Additionally, there are indications that television, digital media, news agencies, and social media may also be more exposed to targeted attacks. In contrast, newspapers and radio appear to be slightly less risky environments.

Finally, media ownership does not exert a decisive influence on violence against journalists, except for community media journalists, who are the most vulnerable to digital risks. Other types of attacks appear to be transversal to all organizational orientations, affecting journalists in private, public, and even, though to a lesser extent, State-owned media. Given the lack of statistical significance, future qualitative research should focus on studying specific forms of violence where journalists in public and State-owned media are slightly more affected to understand whether these types of organizations are genuinely less risky.

Space constraints have made it impossible to explore organizational factors simultaneously with individual or contextual factors. Future research agendas could work on better categorizing and defining different types of violence and modeling their predictive factors to achieve more precise diagnoses of the incidence and prevalence of risk.

This article presents results from the Worlds of Journalism Mexico study, which partakes a large-scale global project. We would like to thank our co-researchers and consortium members in Mexico: Sallie Hughes, Julieta Brambila, José Luis Lemini, and Karles Manzo. We also acknowledge our team members who conducted the interviews

and to all of the journalists who gave us their time. This study was funded by the University of Miami (School of Communication Research Award and the Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas), the Universidad Iberoamericana Mexico City (Research and Graduate Studies Department), the University of Guadalajara (Support Program for the Improvement of Production Conditions for Members of the SNI and SNCA), and the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies and the VIEP Project Program).

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF ATTACKS BY REGION

Region	Conducted surveys (N)	Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you		Public discrediting of journalistic work		Surveillance		Hacking or blocking of websites or social media		Arrests, detentions or imprisonment		Legal actions against you because of your work		Stalking	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Central West	69	2.67	1.12	2.54	1.17	2.12	1.23	1.70	1.08	1.17	0.62	1.46	0.87	1.72	1.01
Central East	70	2.44	1.27	2.27	1.35	2.26	1.38	1.84	1.15	1.07	0.31	1.39	0.86	1.73	1.12
Mexico City	108	2.65	1.16	2.35	1.25	1.69	1.10	1.47	0.85	1.09	0.40	1.15	0.45	1.46	0.86
Northeast	65	2.58	1.17	2.22	1.27	1.91	1.20	1.77	1.24	1.08	0.41	1.11	0.40	1.83	1.04
Northwest	63	2.41	1.17	2.22	1.14	2.02	1.22	1.81	1.06	1.06	0.25	1.25	0.78	1.41	0.75
Southeast	68	2.54	1.07	2.27	1.16	2.03	1.08	1.88	1.09	1.16	0.51	1.32	0.74	1.78	0.91
Statistical significance												$p < 0.05$		$p < 0.05$	

(Cont.)

Direct threats or intimidation		Sexual assault or harassment		Other physical attacks		Coercion		Questioning of personal morality		Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories		Dissemination of your personal information		Workplace bullying	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1.74	0.95	1.41	0.81	1.72	1.12	1.52	0.83	2.28	1.26	1.42	0.81	1.68	1.04	1.86	1.20
1.76	1.10	1.37	0.89	1.33	0.79	1.60	1.10	1.79	1.15	1.41	0.88	1.64	0.99	1.50	0.83
1.63	0.90	1.30	0.70	1.36	0.74	1.21	0.57	1.91	1.14	1.26	0.74	1.42	0.82	1.67	1.07
2.05	1.21	1.37	0.98	1.35	0.91	1.49	0.94	2.38	1.31	1.40	0.81	1.52	0.87	1.88	1.10
1.84	1.08	1.21	0.60	1.48	0.84	1.59	0.96	1.97	1.16	1.24	0.64	1.46	0.89	1.70	1.13
1.99	0.98	1.19	0.53	1.46	0.72	1.49	0.82	1.75	0.94	1.63	0.75	1.68	0.95	1.37	0.79
Statistical significance						$p < 0.05$		$p < 0.005$		$p < 0.05,$				$p < 0.05$	

(Cont.)

Abduction		Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment		Intimidation that targets your family	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1.07	0.43	1.46	0.80	1.28	0.75
1.07	0.36	1.14	0.46	1.23	0.68
1.03	0.17	1.13	0.43	1.08	0.48
1.00	0.00	1.20	0.54	1.25	0.75
1.02	0.13	1.27	0.72	1.19	0.76
1.03	0.17	1.24	0.58	1.21	0.59
Statistical significance		$p < 0.05$			

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF ATTACKS BY GENDER

Gender	N	Demeaning or hateful speech		Public discrediting of journalistic work		Surveillance		Hacking or blocking of websites or social media		Arrests, detentions or imprisonment		Legal actions		Stalking	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Femenine	203	2.44	1.14	2.10	1.15	1.75	1.13	1.55	0.96	1.04	0.22	1.16	0.50	1.50	0.85
Masculine	240	2.66	1.17	2.50	1.26	2.17	1.23	1.86	1.14	1.16	0.54	1.36	0.82	1.76	1.03
Statistical significance				$p < 0.001$,		$p < 0.001$		$p < 0.005$		$p < 0.005$,		$p < 0.005$		$p < 0.005$	

(Cont.)

Direct threats or intimidation		Sexual assault or harassment		Other physical attacks		Coercion		Questioning of personal morality		Using byline for fabricated or manipulated stories	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1.60	0.90	1.62	1.01	1.39	0.82	1.38	0.77	1.88	1.06	1.30	0.71
1.99	1.11	1.04	0.22	1.49	0.89	1.53	0.94	2.10	1.27	1.46	0.83
$p < 0.001$		$p < 0.001$								$p < 0.05$	

(Cont.)

Dissemination of your personal information		Workplace bullying		Abduction		Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment		Intimidation to family	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1.50	0.85	1.79	1.12	1.02	0.17	1.13	0.40	1.13	0.52
1.61	0.98	1.55	0.96	1.05	0.30	1.32	0.71	1.25	0.75
$p < 0.05$					$p < 0.001$				

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