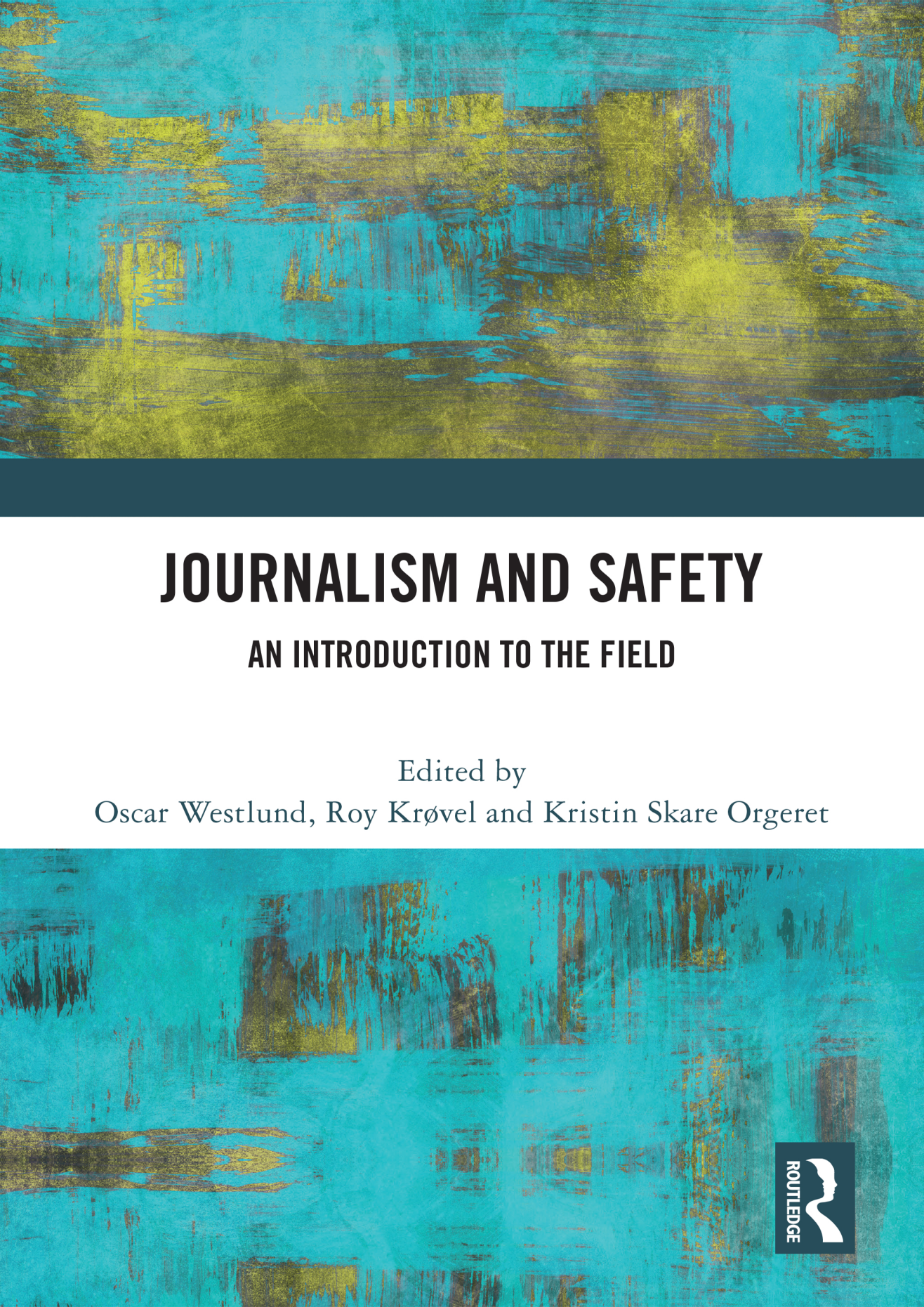




JOURNALISM AND SAFETY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD

Edited by

Oscar Westlund, Roy Krøvel and Kristin Skare Orgeret



Journalism and Safety

This volume presents key international research on journalism and safety with a focus on conceptual, global, and transnational approaches, as well as conflict, challenges, and consequences for democracy. It offers an overview of the latest research and ongoing developments in the field of journalism and safety and speaks to the ways in which digital developments have worsened the risks surrounding journalists, with online harassments, security breaches, surveillance, and so forth challenging their safety like never before.

The first of two volumes, this book comprises a handpicked collection of cutting-edge research articles authored by distinguished international scholars. The chapters in the book were originally published in *Digital Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, and *Journalism Practice* during the years 2019–2023, and have thus been through rigorous double-blind peer review. The chapters draw on data from diverse geographical locations such as U.S., Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Palestine, Latin America, Pakistan, Philippines, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Ethiopia, and Slovakia. The first section of the book focuses on research that either has made significant conceptual advancements on journalism and safety, and/or has contributed with global or transnational approaches, and the second section focuses on challenges in conflict coverage and the impact it has on democracies.

This collection offers important points of entry for understanding this area of research and insights into worthwhile concepts and approaches that can be used to further study and advance knowledge. It will be a key resource for scholars, practitioners, and researchers of journalism, media and cultural studies, communication studies, and sociology, while also being of interest to those seeking an introduction to the field.

Oscar Westlund (PhD) is Professor at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway, where he co-leads the OsloMet Digital Journalism Research Group. He holds a secondary appointment at University of Gothenburg and is the Editor-in-Chief of *Digital Journalism*. He specializes in digital journalism, fact-checking, platforms, epistemology, media management, news consumption, and mobile media.

Roy Krøvel (PhD) is Professor at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway, where he co-leads the OsloMet Media, War and Conflict Research Group with Professor Orgeret. He holds a secondary appointment at the Sami University in Kautokeino, Norway, and is the co-organizer of the annual Safety of Journalists conference in Oslo. He specializes in the safety of journalists, investigative and data journalism, the uses of AI in journalism, Indigenous journalism, and war and peace journalism.

Kristin Skare Orgeret (Dr.Art) is Professor at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway, where she co-leads the research group MEKK (Media, War and Conflict) and organizes annual international conferences on the safety of journalists. She leads the international research project "DD-MAC" on the role of digital media in ongoing violent conflicts. She has published extensively within the field of journalism in conflict situations, global journalism and power relations, and media and gender.

Journalism and Safety

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**Oscar Westlund, Roy Krøvel
and Kristin Skare Orgeret**

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Notes on Contributors

Rosental Calmon Alves, Moody College of Communication School of Journalism, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA.

Rana Arafat, Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society, Institute of Media and Journalism, Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano, Switzerland.

Britt Christensen, Communication Arts, Notre Dame of Maryland University, Baltimore, MD, USA.

Sally Ann Cruikshank, School of Journalism and Strategic Media, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, USA.

Lourdes M. Cueva Chacón, School of Journalism, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, USA.

Mariateresa Garrido, Human rights and International Law Department, University for Peace, Ciudad Colon, Costa Rica.

Basyouni Ibrahim Hamada, Department of Mass Communication, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar.

Lenka Haniková, Department of Media Studies and Journalism, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

Thomas Hanitzsch, LMU Munich, Munich, Germany.

Vanessa de Macedo Higgins Joyce, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA.

Marte Høiby, Journalism and Media Studies, Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway.

Abit Hoxha, University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway.

Sallie Hughes, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL, USA.

Sadia Jamil, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Khalifa University of Science & Technology, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Ali Khalil, College of Communication and Media Sciences, Zayed University, Dubai, UAE.

Roy Krøvel, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway.

Theodora A. Maniou, Journalism Faculty, Department of Social & Political Sciences, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Kaitlin C. Miller, Journalism and Creative Media, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA.

Saumava Mitra, School of Communications, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland.

Kristin Skare Orgeret, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway.

Tania Ouariachi, School of Communication, Media & IT, Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, Netherlands.

Lambrini Papadopoulou, Department of Communication, Media and Culture, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens, Greece.

Lidia Peralta, Faculty of Communication of Cuenca, Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, Ciudad Real, Spain.

Colin Porlezza, Faculty of Communication, Culture and Society, Institute of Media and Journalism, Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano, Switzerland.

Jyotika Ramaprasad, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL, USA.

Jeannine E. Relly, School of Journalism, The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA.

Magdalena Saldaña, School of Communications, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile; Millennium Institute for Foundational Research on Data, Santiago, Chile.

Carol B. Schwalbe, School of Journalism, The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA.

Ethan H. Schwalbe, School of Journalism, The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA.

Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK.

Nina Springer, University of Münster, Münster, Germany.

Nina Steindl, LMU Munich, Munich, Germany.

Marína Urbániková, Department of Media Studies and Journalism, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

Silvio Waisbord, School of Media and Public Affairs, George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA.

Oscar Westlund, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway.

Téwodros W. Workneh, School of Communication Studies, Kent State University, Kent, OH, USA.



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Introduction to the Practice and State of Journalism amid Dangerous Times

Oscar Westlund, Roy Krøvel, and Kristin Skare Orgeret

Journalists have always faced different types of safety risks, not only when reporting from wars or other violent areas, but also when investigating various actors. Amid digital developments the risks surrounding journalists have worsened. Oftentimes journalists, as well as fact-checkers, are visible on digital and social media, making it fairly easy for others to criticize, harass, and threaten them. A multitude of actors, such as states, criminal organizations, activists, and citizens repeatedly attack journalists and news publishers. Ultimately, contemporary journalism is a profession and occupation increasingly associated with concerns for safety, with journalists being hacked, threatened, harassed, and even killed. Both publishers and researchers have increasingly come to recognize the existence and importance of the mental well-being and safety of journalists. Safety is essential for journalists, their organizations, and sources, as well as the family members of journalists. Safety for journalists is essential for journalism as an institution in democratic societies.

While there were some pioneering research efforts into the intersection of journalism and safety during the two first decades of the 21st century, this is an area of research that has gained much significance in the 2020s. This book offers a handpicked collection of high-quality research articles published throughout 2020–2023 in three internationally prominent journalism studies journals: *Digital Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, and *Journalism Practice*. The book brings together a diverse set of articles, and draws from special issues in *Journalism Practice* and *Journalism Studies* that the editors of this book have advanced in 2022 and 2023, respectively. The *Journalism Practice* special issue introduced the newsafety concept, which focuses on safety in journalism *practice*, and how it is interwoven with (technological) *infrastructures* and diverse *consequences* (Westlund, Krøvel & Skare Orgeret, 2022). The *Journalism Studies* special issue, on the other hand, focused on risk, resistance, and resilience associated with the safety of journalists (Krøvel, Palumbo & Skare Orgeret, 2023).

Drawing from the special issues, and other original articles in the three journals, we have put together a book with two volumes, among which this is the first volume. We have intentionally sought to move beyond the themes and analyses of the original special issues, in an attempt to paint a broader canvas of research and knowledge to date. This book constitutes the first volume out of two books.

This volume features 15 research articles, which we have thematically organized into two sections covering research advancing conceptual frameworks, global and transnational approaches, as well as studies into conflicts, challenges, and consequences for democracy. The subsequent book in this series will focus on journalism and safety from the perspectives

of organizations, groups, and professionals. These themes cover critical areas of contemporary research into journalism and safety. Notwithstanding this, since the book is limited to including research from three international journals with articles published in English, it obviously does not empty out all literature in the field on these themes. Next we turn to systematically introduce all the 15 articles in the book, theme by theme.

Conceptual, Global, and Transnational Approaches

This section focuses on research that either has made significant conceptual advancements on journalism and safety, and/or has contributed with global or transnational approaches. In advancing research into journalism and safety scholars may of course employ theories and conceptual frameworks already established, and in such ways standing on the shoulders of giants and contributing to research cumulatively. Meanwhile, there is also need and room for developing and explicating concepts that can be applied for fruitful analyses of the emerging field. To continue, there is a need for advancing ways to operationalize empiric research into journalism and safety aspects. This section offers important contributions of such kinds.

Let us begin with **Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova, Jyotika Ramaprasad, Nina Springer, Sallie Hughes, Thomas Hanitzsch, Basyouni Ibrahim Hamada, Abit Hoxha, and Nina Steindl** (2023) who have co-authored “Conceptualizing Journalists’ Safety around the Globe”. The authors advance a comprehensive, interdisciplinary framework of journalists’ safety, summarized in a conceptual model that also is referred to as a methodological tool with directions for future research. Surrounded by power dynamics, the model captures how risk factors (societal, institutional/organizational, and individual) threaten the occupational safety of journalists (physical, psychological, digital, and financial), which in turn imposes stress that journalists need to cope with (adaptive and maladaptive). Ultimately, this may lead to resilience and resistance, or compliance and submission, or avoidance and exit.

To continue, we zoom in on “Mob Censorship: Online Harassment of US Journalists in Times of Digital Hate and Populism” by **Silvio Waisbord**. This conceptual article introduces the concept of mob censorship. Waisbord writes “my argument is that online harassment is mob censorship, which I define as bottom-up, citizen vigilantism aimed at disciplining and silencing journalists. Mob censorship threatens the safety and the speech rights of reporters.” (2020: 1031). Waisbord argues that three factors are essential with regards to mob censorship and online harassment: first, that journalists are relatively easy to access on digital platforms, ubiquitous trolling cultures and, second, that populism demonizes the press. The concept of mob censorship, with its emphasis on collective and rather aggressive actions by citizens toward journalists, has become widely used in subsequent studies by scholars across the globe.

In their cross-sectional study (2013–2017) with journalists working across 20 countries in Latin America, **Vanessa de Macedo Higgins Joyce, Lourdes Cueva Chacón, and Rosental Calmon Alves** (2022) study both physical and digital threats. The authors use the hierarchy of influence model to analyze Latin American journalists’ perceptions of threats and attacks as barriers to investigative journalism. They found that threats and attacks to investigative journalism were perceived as most salient among women, independent or digital journalists, and those relatively new to the profession.

Colin Porlezza and Rana Arafat (2022) contribute with an empirical study of newsafety in terms of both physical and digital threats, in their article titled “Promoting Newsafety from the Exile: The Emergence of New Journalistic Roles in Diaspora Journalists’ Networks”. Applying a metajournalistic discourse analysis and analyzing interviews with representatives of three Syrian online advocacy networks created and led by diaspora journalists, their study focuses on perceived threats, role perceptions, and counterstrategies emerging. Ultimately the diaspora journalists express they cannot escape online threats and have thus formed counterstrategies, including both proactive and reactive training and rescue programs. An important contribution comes in the form of Porlezza and Arafat introducing four journalistic roles: sousveillance, defender, trainer, and regulator/policy developer.

Next we have **Lourdes M. Cueva Chacón** and **Magdalena Saldaña** (2021), who have co-authored an article titled “Stronger and Safer Together: Motivations for and Challenges of (Trans)National Collaboration in Investigative Reporting in Latin America”. A point of departure for their study into investigative journalism in Latin America relates to the relative absence of research into newsroom collaboration. Their mixed methods study with investigative journalists in Latin American news outlets, the authors study three key areas. First, the rationales for participation in national and transnational collaborative enterprises in Latin America. Second, the key challenges. Third, what roles digital technologies have for transnational collaboration. The authors conclude that collaborations stimulate more comprehensive coverage and reach larger audiences.

Next, in ‘Lockdown’ on Digital Journalism? Mapping Threats to Press Freedom during the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis by **Lambrini Papadopoulou** and **Theodora A. Maniou** (2021) we learn from a study gathering data from worldwide press freedom monitoring tools and other global platforms deemed as credible. The findings show that the pandemic added to already known threats to press freedom, across both Western democracies and non-democratic authoritarian countries, and were associated with aims to silence digital journalism. Papadopoulou and Maniou offer a conceptualization of the diverse mix of threats associated with press freedom amid global crises.

Lastly follows a study by **Basyouni Ibrahim Hamada** (2022) titled “Determinants of Journalists’ Autonomy and Safety: Evidence from the Worlds of Journalism Study”. Drawing on an international survey study with journalists from 65 countries, Hamada studies the interplay of subjective perceptions of political influences and objective structural political forces when it comes to journalists’ autonomy and safety. There are three key findings. Firstly, there is a strong positive correlation between democracy and press freedom. Secondly, a strong positive correlation between editorial autonomy and safety of journalists. Thirdly, there is a strong negative correlation between editorial autonomy and safety on the one hand and journalists’ perception of political influences on the other hand.

Conflict, Challenges, and Consequences for Democracy

This section brings together eight original contributions focusing on three core themes relating to democracy, conflicts, challenges and consequences when it comes to journalism and safety. We find articles on challenges in conflict coverage and the impact it has on democracies. The articles cover regions from Syria to Slovakia, displaying the diverse landscapes journalists navigate. The studies probe into risks journalists face, such as physical threats, censorship, surveillance, and harassment. These challenges impact journalists’

well-being and regional democracy, peace, and stability. The articles highlight journalists' resilience and strategies, including cooperation with citizen journalists, social media use, information-sharing networks, and media landscape adaptation. They also underscore the urgent need for awareness, legal protections, and strategies to safeguard journalists' rights and facilitate effective work.

This section starts with a contribution titled in "Reality on the Ground: Exploring News Production Practices by Syrian Journalists in Times of Conflict", and has been co-authored by **Tania Ouariachi** and **Lidia Peralta** (2023). They investigate the challenges faced by Syrian journalists in reporting during times of conflict. The study focuses on the experiences and practices of journalists working in Syria, shedding light on the complex dynamics they navigate to gather and disseminate news. The findings highlight the significant risks and dangers faced by journalists, including threats to their physical safety, censorship, and self-censorship. The study also uncovers the strategies employed by journalists to overcome these challenges, such as relying on citizen journalists, utilizing social media platforms, and forming networks for information sharing. The authors emphasize the importance of understanding the context-specific nature of journalism in conflict zones and the need to support and protect journalists in their vital role of providing accurate and independent information to the public.

Next follows "Reporting Conflict from Afar: Journalists, Social Media, Communication Technologies, and War" by **Britt Christensen** and **Ali Khalil** (2023). Their contribution explores the role of journalists and the impact of social media and communication technologies in reporting conflicts. The study focuses on the experiences of journalists who cover conflicts remotely, using social media platforms and digital communication tools. The findings reveal that these technologies have revolutionized the way journalists gather and disseminate information, allowing them to reach a wider audience and provide real-time updates. However, the study also highlights the challenges and ethical dilemmas faced by journalists in this context, such as verifying information, maintaining objectivity, and dealing with the potential risks of online harassment and misinformation. The authors emphasize the need for journalists to adapt to the changing media landscape while upholding professional standards and ethical practices. They also highlight the importance of media organizations providing adequate training and support to journalists working in conflict zones. Overall, the study contributes to our understanding of the evolving role of journalists in reporting conflicts and the impact of social media and communication technologies on the field of journalism.

In "Harassment's Toll on Democracy: The Effects of Harassment Towards US Journalists" by **Kaitlin C. Miller** (2021), the author explores the impact of harassment on journalists in the United States. The study focuses on the experiences of US journalists who have faced harassment in their professional lives, shedding light on the detrimental effects it has on democracy. The findings reveal that harassment not only affects the targeted journalists personally but also undermines their ability to perform their journalistic duties effectively. It leads to self-censorship, fear, and a chilling effect on press freedom. The study highlights the need for increased awareness, legal protections, and support systems to address and prevent harassment of journalists. It emphasizes the importance of a free and independent press in a democratic society and the urgent need to safeguard journalists' safety and freedom of expression.

Next follows the article “Human Security as a Conceptual Framework: The Case of Palestinian Journalists”, where **Carol B. Schwalbe, Jeannine E. Relly, Sally Ann Cruikshank, and Ethan H. Schwalbe** (2019) examine the concept of human security and its relevance to the case of Palestinian journalists. The study explores the unique challenges faced by Palestinian journalists, including physical violence, harassment, and restrictions on freedom of expression. The findings highlight the importance of understanding human security as a comprehensive framework that encompasses not only physical safety but also economic, social, and political dimensions. The study reveals that the threats faced by Palestinian journalists not only affect their personal well-being but also have broader implications for democracy, peace, and stability in the region. The authors emphasize the need for a holistic approach to addressing the security concerns of journalists, including measures to ensure their physical safety, protect their freedom of expression, and promote their socio-economic well-being. The study contributes to the understanding of human security in the context of journalism and provides insights into the specific challenges faced by Palestinian journalists in their pursuit of truth and information dissemination.

Next, **Sadia Jamil** (2021) explores the impact of surveillance on journalists in Pakistan in “The Monitored Watchdogs: Journalists’ Surveillance and its Repercussions for their Professional and Personal Lives in Pakistan”. The study focuses on the extensive surveillance practices employed by state and non-state actors, which have severe consequences for journalists’ professional and personal lives. The findings reveal that journalists in Pakistan face constant monitoring, including electronic surveillance, physical surveillance, and harassment. The surveillance not only restricts journalists’ freedom of expression but also leads to self-censorship, fear, and psychological distress. The study highlights the need for increased awareness, legal protections, and digital security measures to safeguard journalists’ rights and enable them to carry out their vital role in society. It emphasizes the urgent need for reforms in surveillance practices and the protection of journalists’ privacy and freedom of the press.

In “Medium-Specific Threats for Journalists: Examples from Philippines, Afghanistan, and Venezuela” by **Saumava Mitra, Marte Høiby, and Mariateresa Garrido** (2021), the authors explore the specific threats faced by journalists in different media environments. The study focuses on three countries – Philippines, Afghanistan, and Venezuela – and examines the challenges journalists encounter while working in these contexts. The findings reveal that journalists face unique risks and dangers depending on the medium they operate in, such as online harassment and cyberattacks for digital journalists, physical violence and targeted killings for broadcast journalists, and legal restrictions and censorship for print journalists. The study highlights the need for tailored safety measures and support systems for journalists based on the medium they work in. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding the specific challenges faced by journalists in different media environments and the need for comprehensive strategies to protect their safety and freedom of expression.

Téwodros W. Workneh (2022) examines the emerging threats faced by journalists in Ethiopia, shifting from state repression to fear of non-state actors. The study highlights the challenges journalists face in practicing independent journalism due to the restrictive media environment in Ethiopia. It explores the transition from state repression to a new form of fear, primarily driven by non-state actors such as political groups, religious institutions, and community organizations. These non-state actors exert control and influence over journalists through intimidation, harassment, and self-censorship. The study emphasizes

the need for a comprehensive understanding of the threats faced by journalists in Ethiopia, including the role of both state and non-state actors. It concludes that the changing dynamics of journalism practice in Ethiopia require a multifaceted approach to ensure the safety and freedom of journalists, protect press freedom, and foster a democratic media environment.

The eighth and final article of this section is titled “Coping with the Murder: The Impact of Ján Kuciak’s Assassination on Slovak Investigative Journalists” and has been co-authored by **Marína Urbániková** and **Lenka Haníková** (2022). They examine the repercussions of the assassination of investigative journalist Ján Kuciak on the Slovak media landscape. The study focuses on the experiences of Slovak investigative journalists following Kuciak’s murder, shedding light on the profound impact it had on their professional and personal lives. The findings reveal that the assassination created a climate of fear and self-censorship among journalists, as they faced threats and intimidation from powerful figures implicated in Kuciak’s investigations. The study highlights the importance of journalists’ resilience and determination to continue their work despite the risks, as well as the need for stronger protections for investigative journalists and freedom of the press. The authors emphasize the significance of Kuciak’s legacy in inspiring a new generation of journalists committed to exposing corruption and holding those in power accountable.

Final notes

Our final note for this volume actually is everything but a final note. We recognize that this volume, with the 15 fine contributions from a diverse set of scholars, clearly advances research into journalism and safety. In recent years rather huge epistemological leaps have been taken when it comes to producing knowledge about the intersection of journalism and safety. It has been firmly established that the safety of journalists, and journalism, is at risk in a multitude of ways. This volume offers important points of entry for understanding this area of research, and also insight into worthwhile concepts and approaches that can be used to further study and advance knowledge.

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Part I

Conceptual, Global and Transnational Approaches



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Conceptualizing Journalists' Safety around the Globe

Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova , Jyotika Ramaprasad, Nina Springer,
Sallie Hughes, Thomas Hanitzsch , Basyouni Ibrahim Hamada, Abit Hoxha 
and Nina Steindl 

ABSTRACT

Killings, as the most extreme form of violence against journalists, receive considerable attention, but journalists experience a variety of threats from surveillance to gendered cyber targeting and hate speech, or even the intentional deprivation of their financial basis. This article provides a comprehensive, interdisciplinary framework of journalists' safety, summarized in a conceptual model. The aim is to advance the study of journalists' safety and improve safety practices, journalism education, advocacy, and policy making - vital as press freedom and fundamental human rights face multifaceted challenges, compromising journalists' ability to serve their societies. Journalists' occupational safety comprises personal (physical, psychological) and infrastructural (digital, financial) dimensions. Safety can be objective and subjective by operating on material and perceptual levels. It is moderated by individual (micro), organizational/institutional (meso), and systemic (macro) risk factors, rooted in power dynamics defining boundaries for journalists' work, which, if crossed, result in threats and create work-related stress. Stress requires coping, ideally resulting in resilience and resistance, and manifested in journalists' continued role performance with autonomy. Compromised safety has personal and social consequences as threats might affect role performance and even lead to an exit from the profession, thus also affecting journalism's wider function as a key institution.

The year 2022 marks the tenth anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Since 1993, on average, one journalist has been killed every seven days for work-related reasons.¹ As a consequence, the global monitoring of safety threats to journalists has strongly focused on physical safety, primarily documenting killings of reporters, imprisonments, forced exile, and legal restrictions. Safety has thus emerged as an important topic in academic and public discourse, given the issues journalists have encountered globally because of, among other things,

covering topics that raise the ire of governments and drug lords, and reporting from conflict zones or, more recently, from places especially hit by Covid-19.

Journalists' occupational safety, however, is jeopardized in many more ways these days – even in countries where the workforce is considered to be physically comparatively safe. For one, journalists experience a variety of psychological threats. Particular areas of concern include aggressions such as hate speech (Obermaier, Hofbauer, and Reinemann 2018) and sexual harassment (Ferrier and Garud-Patkar 2018; Idås, Orgeret, and Backholm 2020; Unaegbu 2017), often in digital environments (Adams 2018; Chen et al. 2020), losing a colleague to violence, and experiencing other multiple forms of job-related threats and aggressions on journalists' mental and emotional wellbeing (Garcés-Prettel, Arroyave-Cabrera, and Baltar-Moreno 2020; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2018; Osofsky, Holloway, and Pickett 2005; Parker 2015). The financial security of journalistic labor has also become an issue of increasing concern as dysfunctional media markets and political entanglements, advertisement cuts and, in conjuncture, the lack of strategies to monetize digital content jeopardize the continuous, professional performance of journalistic work all over the world (e.g., Hayes and Silke 2019; Matthews and Onyemaobi 2020).

Journalists' safety not only affects individual journalists and the profession but, by threatening freedom of expression, also democracies and societies as a whole (Høiby and Ottosen 2019). A growing body of research is dealing with these issues, in large part prompted by the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (2012), but it still remains the case that the majority of studies focus on one context or a limited number of contexts/case studies and a specific aspect of safety (e.g., Garcés-Prettel, Arroyave-Cabrera, and Baltar-Moreno 2020; Hasan and Wadud 2020; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2018; Kim 2010; Nyabuga 2016). Comparative studies are rare and mostly focus on specific regions (Asal et al. 2018; Bjørnskov and Freytag 2016; Chen et al. 2020; Hughes et al. 2017; Marcesse 2017). Despite large policy interest (Torsner 2017), this topic remains under- or unsystematically researched and there is, to date, no common definition of journalists' safety upon which a conceptual framework can rest that relates the roots of the lack of safety to individual and societal consequences. A conceptual framework would capture, in a holistic way, the main factors posing threats to journalists' occupational safety, the coping strategies for dealing with both the threats and the resulting stress and, depending on the support structures and resources available to help journalists cope, journalists' differing responses and the final outcomes of these responses. Given the multifaceted issue at hand, this framework must be interdisciplinary, cover the totality of these complexities in a truly global way, and guide future investigations.

This article aims at providing such a conceptual framework by combining innovatively perspectives from the sociology of journalism, political theory, psychology, media economy, risk analysis, and wider safety research literature. We start by proposing a comprehensive definition of journalists' safety built upon an understanding of the range of threats to safety since safety is mostly considered from the perspective of its absence. We continue by carving out what we diagnose as causes of threats – which we see rooted in power dynamics that play out between journalists and the political elite or specific social groups making claims to power but also in journalists'

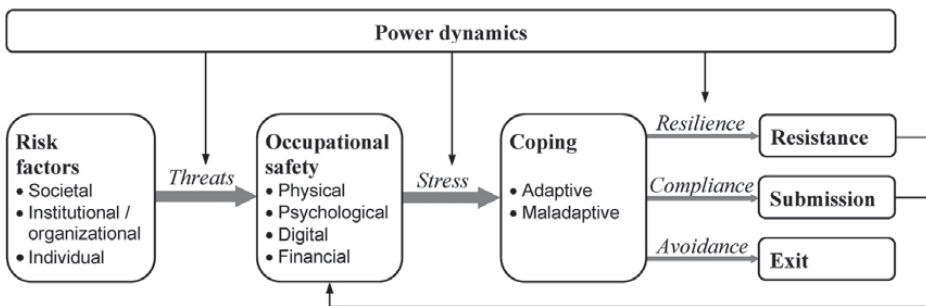


Figure 1. Journalists' safety conceptual model.

responses and actions when they find themselves in unsafe situations and conditions. Power is the fundamental dynamic that undergirds journalists' safety. Power manifests in factors that put journalists' safety at risk, and these factors spawn threats, which in turn lead to stress, coping, self-preservation efforts, and actions. We propose a conceptual model of journalists' safety as a methodological tool, thus offering potential directions for future research (Figure 1). We conclude by discussing the implications of our contribution to journalism education, advocacy, and policy making.

Conceptualizing and Defining Journalists' Safety

Safety research defines "workplace safety as an attribute of work systems reflecting the (low) likelihood of *physical harm*—whether immediate or delayed—to persons, property, or the environment during the performance of work" (Beus, McCord, and Zohar 2016, 353). While this conceptualisation provides a good starting point, our definition must detach itself from a concrete workplace and focus instead on *work-related tasks* because for journalists, workplaces include their offices, reporting sites, and their homes (especially for freelancers). Consequently, we propose to use the term *occupational safety* because journalists' safety is linked to their occupational activities as journalists. In performing these tasks, the well-being of a journalist as a person as well as their autonomy as an institutional actor are interconnected and thus are integral to a journalist's safety.²

In the literature, the issue of journalists' safety is typically approached from the perspective of its absence. Research usually focuses on situations in which the likelihood of harm is high. As Workneh (2022) explained, "in its most basic interpretation, particularly in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian contexts, safety denotes the absence of harm generated from the journalist's reporting activities". Existing research into the risks journalists face that can result in potential harm for them and the institution of journalism shows that not only journalists' physical but also their *psychological safety* is at stake (Table 1). Scholars such as Frazier et al. (2017), Edmondson (1999), and Kahn (1990) define psychological workplace safety as the belief that the workplace allows for risk-taking without the likelihood of severe harm within an organizational context, for example, in a team. In journalism research, a definition must also look beyond the organizational and institutional context. Journalists face scrutiny from a wider range of actors and the reactions to their work are often public. Hence, for

Table 1. Safety dimensions and related threats.

Occupational safety			
Pillar 1: Personal safety		Pillar 2: Infrastructural safety	
Dimension 1: Physical Impact journalists' bodily self	Dimension 2: Psychological Impact journalists' mental and emotional wellbeing	Dimension 3: Digital Impact journalists' digital self- determination and freedoms	Dimension 4: Financial Impact journalists' professional survival and ideologies
• Violent attacks threatening physical integrity, such as killings, torture, and beatings • Acts that threaten physical mobility, such as abductions, arrests, detentions, and imprisonment	• Verbal aggression, hate speech, dissemination of personal information, (sexual, gendered) harassment, stalking, citizen vigilantism aimed at disciplining and silencing journalists • Attacks on ability to carry out reporting, such as intimidation, coercion, workplace bullying, office raids, and seizures or damage to equipment	• Threats to journalists' digital privacy, including phishing attacks • Digital surveillance, limiting access to information, hacking or blocking digital contents, and criminalization of digital whistle-blowing	• Threat to job stability • Threat to execution of basic journalistic practices/routines (sourcing, verification, producing) and ethics • Normative role conception (fourth estate) threatened to be replaced by market-based, neo-liberal ideology • Threat to topic and workforce diversity

Sources: Carlsson and Pöyhtäri 2017; Chalaby 2000; Chen et al. 2020; Díaz and de Frutos 2017; Di Salvo 2022; Fox, Cruz, and Lee 2015; Edström 2016; Henrichsen, Betz, and Lisosky 2015; Hasan and Wadud 2020; Hayes and Silke 2019; Henrichsen 2020; Hughes et al. 2021; Idås, Orgeret, and Backholm 2020; Matthews and Onyemaobi 2020; Miller 2021; Örnebring and Möller 2018; Parker 2015; Post and Kepplinger 2019; Stahel and Schoen 2020; Tsui and Lee 2021; Waisbord 2020; West 2018

journalists, psychological safety includes the possibility of risk-taking without the likelihood of harm from outside actors and institutions, too.

Further, the functioning of journalism is highly dependent on two types of infrastructure: financial and technological/digital. If these are torpedoed or the digital space rendered as threatening, journalistic performance is jeopardized. Thus, journalists must have what we term *digital safety*: the digitization of their work must not put the workforce at risk. They also need *financial safety* in terms of continuation of their employment and occupation, currently threatened by precarity in the form of low or reduced wages and job loss, resulting in a shrinking workforce and de-professionalization tendencies observed globally.

Therefore, we conceptualize journalists' safety as the *extent to which journalists can perform their work-related tasks without facing threats to their physical, psychological, digital, and financial integrity and well-being*. Given that these threats are experienced in the course or as a result of performing their professional duties, all four dimensions – physical and psychological, digital, and financial – are part of journalists' occupational safety. This definition captures both *objective manifestations* of threats in the real world (material level) and journalists' *subjective awareness* thereof (perceptual level). We use the term *threat* instead of harm because threats can be both a stated intention by antagonists that harmful actions will be taken against an individual and the anticipation by the threatened individual of imminent harm. Thus, threat refers to anything with the potential to cause harm, while harm is the actual effect(s), which we include under dimensions of safety. Threats are harmful in their own right because

they compromise journalists' safety and their ability to perform their duties and serve their respective societies.

Conceptualizing and Defining Threats to Journalists' Safety

We define threats to journalists' safety as the *actions and conditions that increase the risk of physical, psychological, digital, and financial harm to journalists as human beings and as institutional actors* (Brambila and Hughes 2019). While safety research operates with the term *likelihood*, we propose the use of the term *risk* in the context of journalists' safety. Both convey a similar meaning but the term *risk* bears more relevant, normative implications for what is "safe". Drawing from the interdisciplinary field of risk analysis, risk can be defined "by the probability and severity of adverse effects" (Aven 2011, 515). Accordingly, risk is a combination of likelihood and the extent of harm that may follow as a consequence. Applied to journalism research, (high-)risk situations evolve if journalists face (existential) threats to themselves as individuals and institutional actors and to the viability and sustainability of journalism as an institution making a meaningful and vital contribution to social life. Here again, our definition aims to encompass both the objective manifestations of risk and threats, and journalists' subjective perceptions of them (see also Hughes et al. 2021).

Existing research (Table 1) revealed a diverse set of threats but our focus is on threats exerted intentionally.² To start with, *physical threats* may lead to bodily harm. They include murder, beating, torture, sexual assault, and other work-related attacks, forced relocation, arrest, detention, imprisonment, abduction and disappearance as well as acute biological and weather-related threats, such as risks to health in the COVID-19 pandemic and from covering disasters. *Psychological threats* target emotional wellbeing. They include intimidation, coercion, extortion, sexual harassment, doxing (dissemination of personal information), demeaning and hateful speech, public ridicule and discrediting, citizen vigilantism, workplace bullying, and potentially traumatizing work assignments. *Digital threats* include various hacking and surveillance attacks as well as limiting or blocking access to information, sources, and audiences, thus pointing to the urgent need to study the "multifaceted chilling effects of online attacks" (Waisbord 2020, 1038). A chilling effect has also been detected in the study of *financial threats* leading to precarious work conditions (Hayes and Silke 2019). Precarity challenges the operational basis of journalism as an institution. On the individual level, precarity manifests in unemployment, the loss of income or position, professional standing, and reputation – or, in less well-equipped journalistic cultures, it characterizes work conditions that had never been economically stable (e.g., Matthews and Onyemaobi 2020). Freelance work, in particular, deprives a journalist of the support of a news organization that can implement safety precautions and training for reporting (Brambila 2018), or provide life insurance and access to good healthcare (Steiner and Chadha 2022). Freelance work may also increase the incentives to take risks because pay is determined by the number of stories produced as well as "scoops" that may require entering into dangerous scenarios.

These threats can originate from actors and groups within the state, but also from non-state and/or foreign actors (e.g., hacking or disinformation, see Table 1). While not

of primary focus, all four types of threats can also be directed at family and loved ones and cause risk of harm to their integrity and wellbeing. Moreover, while there are clear distinctions between the different dimensions and threats to safety, there are also significant overlaps. Digital, physical, and financial safety are clearly interlinked with psychological safety (e.g., online hate speech, physical attacks, and job instability could have psychological consequences). In spite of these overlaps, we classify into dimensions as an analytic exercise that will help us understand interactions between them and allow for tailored support systems.

All these threats by their nature compromise journalists' occupational safety and potentially jeopardize the continuation of the performance of journalistic tasks, as well as journalists' autonomy, performance and, fundamentally, journalists' ability to fulfill their social functions. Threats are also a gross violation of individual human rights, and of transparency and accountability principles. They undermine people's right to know that in turn reduces the level of trust in media and participation in public debate so essential for democracy (Hasan and Wadud 2020; Marino 2013). Thus, the safety of reporters is equally a problem for journalism, media freedom and freedom of expression, democracy, and society as a whole (Høiby and Ottosen 2019).

The Root of Safety Issues: Power Dynamics

By building on political and sociological theory, we argue that *power dynamics* are at the root of the described threats, therefore, undergirding journalists' safety. While different ideas about power exist, we focus on conceptualizations of "power as domination, largely characterized as power over" (Haugaard 2012, 33). According to Weber (1979), power can be understood as the probability of being able to carry out one's own will (or agenda) despite resistance. More differentiated, power can be conceptualized as encompassing three dimensions (Lukes 1974/2005; Heywood 2015): it may, first, "involve the ability to influence the making of decisions; second, be reflected in the capacity to shape the political agenda and thus prevent decisions being made; and third, take the form of controlling people's thoughts by the manipulation of their perceptions and preferences" (Heywood 2015, 110). The last form of power is also linked to ideological/symbolic or discursive power (115) as the "power to construct reality" (Bourdieu 1979, 79; see also Hayes and Silke 2019).

These power dimensions can refer to an individual or collective actors' power over journalists, or conversely to the journalists' power over these actors. In accordance with the three dimensions of power, while journalistic influence (1) does not comprise any kind of legislative authority, it can under certain circumstances (2) impact the political agenda and (3) shape individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and public opinion (e.g., Levendusky and Malhotra 2016; Lohner and Banjac 2017; Van Dalen and Van Aelst 2014) and, thus, (4) construct reality. Journalists can have this influence because they have privileged access to two scarce resources: (a) information and (b) public attention. Independent of the political and media system under investigation, these resources are granted either on behalf of the state or in the interest of the general public. Journalists can thereby potentially threaten the interests of specific actors and groups. Triggers might be fear of being harmed physically or deprived materially due to journalistic

coverage, but also concern that journalists' reporting may publicly challenge the "integrity or validity of the ingroup's meaning system" (Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison 2009, 43). This can create a feeling of being "dishonored, disrespected, or dehumanized" by members of the journalistic corps (44). Accordingly, journalists are targeted not only because they might uncover illegitimate exertion of power, but also because of their (feared) influence over public opinion and, in the case of female and minority journalists, because they embody cultural challenges to systems of oppression that privilege certain groups or identities. To counter this influence, actors and groups apply means of power in a fight over dominance. Such direct or indirect attempts to limit the symbolic power and influence of journalists affect journalistic autonomy (Löfgren Nilsson and Örnebring 2016), i.e., their ability to self-govern, to make decisions in (moral) independence from internal (e.g., management, economic) and external (e.g., political, legislative) factors (e.g., Sjøvaag 2013; Reich and Hanitzsch 2013).

Use of power can create resistance (Weber 1979), which those in the position of power then have to cope with (see also, Barbalet 1985). Antagonists can resist journalistic power that creates the perceived and unwanted media effects by using (1) decision-making power to limit journalistic freedoms; (2) power to not make/allow a decision, such as (not) passing legislation for trespasses against journalists, or preventing the application of such laws, e.g., impunity; and (3) symbolic power to endorse ideologies antagonistic to journalism, e.g., establishing a delegitimizing "fake news" narrative (Lukes 1974/2005; see also Carlson, Robinson, and Lewis 2021). Connected to this, antagonistic forces can also exercise instrumental power (Popitz 2017), i.e., the power to 'control', conduct and safeguard conformity through "the ability to give and take ... to be able to make arrangements concerning punishments and rewards that appear credible to those concerned" (12–13). Examples include economic pressure such as governments' withdrawal of advertisements, media's dependence on clientelistic quid-pro-quos with government, and other influence exerted through private sector advertisers' interests (e.g., Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez 2014; Hanusch, Banjac, and Maares 2020; Wright, Scott, and Bunce 2020). Societal pressure for journalists' protection may be lacking where populist rhetoric or political instrumentalization of news has eroded trust; thus, governments, corporations, cartels, even some members of the public may join in harassment when the press system is perceived as acting against public or group interests (González Macías and Reyna García 2019).

The most intimidating power is the power of action that constitutes the "capacity to inflict harm on others" (Popitz 2017, 11). This form of power, exerted as psychological or physical violence (and captured by our psychological and physical dimensions of safety), is based on inequalities stemming from "inborn endowments, muscular strength ... and, above all, from unequal control over contrived devices that enhance the efficiency of the harming action—weapons and the organizational arrangements for combat" (ibid., 11). Such violence is exerted by deviant, disinhibited individuals through misogynous or racist comments, including rape and death threats, but also strategically by members of deviant organizations (e.g., radical right-wing protesters) or by antagonists who constitute the 'power elite' in a country (e.g., Krøvel 2017; Preuß, Tetzlaff, and Zick 2017). When all these types of power coalesce in government, they can accumulate in their effect (Imbusch 2016).

Such power-based antagonistic political, ideological, legislative, economic, and public, i.e., societal, institutional/organizational, and group/individual pressures are the risk factors that create the threats classified in Table 1. They define the room for action within which journalists are expected to perform their work. If and when journalists maneuver to maximize performance and (intentionally or unintentionally) transgress this space beyond a threshold acceptable to antagonists, they become subject to threats and thereby expose themselves to risk. Given that safety is related to the absence, prevention and mitigation of risk that could lead to harm, we turn to a discussion of *risk factors*, which are rooted in the overriding power dynamics and are present at societal, institutional, organizational, and occasionally individual levels.

Risk Factors

Based on our definition of threats above, risk factors are able to influence whether, and thereby how likely, threats are to manifest in material or perceptual form (moderating factors). In statistical terms, risk factors determine to what extent threats (as independent variables) impact journalists' safety (as dependent variable). We differentiate between individual (micro level), organizational or institutional (meso level), and societal (macro level) *risk factors*, and start with the latter, which comprise political, economic, and cultural risk factors.

Political risk factors determine journalists' room to maneuver. In societies where the political system cannot guarantee the rule of law, crime, corruption, violence, and human rights abuses are frequently sources of threat (Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez 2018). Authoritarian controls reducing press freedom can also create threats that lead to serious harm to journalists, even in electoral democracies (Hamada 2022). This is especially true in hybrid democratic-authoritarian political systems where some journalists subscribe to norms that seek to restrain the power of the state, but they do so without the protection of the full rule of law (Hughes and Vorobyeva 2021). Closely related to political risk factors, we identify *cultural risk factors* which may be present in societies where racism, sexism, and homophobia prevail or at least find soil to thrive. Lastly, also closely related to political risk factors are *economic risk factors*, which include the condition of the journalistic labour market (e.g., O'Donnell and Zion 2019), and—from a political economy viewpoint—concentration of ownership, media owners, and collusion with the state (Garcés-Prettel, Arroyave-Cabrera, and Baltar-Moreno 2020). All macro level risk factors are interlinked. Thus, in a context such as Central and Eastern Europe, there have been recent democratic backslides, which include the problematic interlinking of political and economic interests and a worrying trend towards “media capture”, wherein “media outlets have been brought under direct or indirect government control”, including financially through the “weaponization” of government advertising revenue “to harm critical media and financially boost friendly outlets” (Selva 2020, 7–15).

Next, risk factors operate not only on the macro level but also on the meso level in the form of *institutional* and *organizational risk factors*. The rise of the platformisation of news and algorithm-mediated messages through social media as well as the blurred boundaries of journalistic workers with content providers pose threats in various ways,

including digital hate and mob censorship (Waisbord 2020). Institutional and organizational risk factors may even interact with other risk factors, described above, because in more dangerous work environments they usually also manifest themselves at an institutional or organizational level. For instance, in societies where violence and suffering become frequent topics of coverage, safety risks for the journalists who cover them elevate (Backholm and Björkqvist 2012; Feinstein, Audet, and Waknine 2014; Flores Morales, Reyes Pérez, and Reidl Martínez 2012, 2014; Himmelstein and Faithorn 2002; Hughes et al. 2021; Høiby 2020; Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh 2003; Slavtcheva-Petkova 2018; Tumber 2006; Weidmann and Papsdorf 2010; Weidmann, Fehm, and Fydrich 2008). Consequently, certain newsbeats (e.g., crime, corruption, and politics) make these risks more salient in political systems that are authoritarian or mix democratic and authoritarian traits (Bromley and Slavtcheva-Petkova 2018; Garcés Prettel and Arroyave Cabrera 2017; Hughes and Vorobyeva 2021). Linked to journalistic routines, task-based risk factors can include witnessing violence and suffering or working in dangerous conditions while covering natural disasters, conflict or violence (Backholm and Björkqvist 2012; Feinstein, Audet, and Waknine 2014; Flores Morales, Reyes Pérez, and Reidl Martínez 2012, 2014; Himmelstein and Faithorn 2002; Hughes et al. 2021; Høiby 2020; Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh 2003; Slavtcheva-Petkova 2018; Tumber 2006; Weidmann and Papsdorf 2010; Weidmann, Fehm, and Fydrich 2008). Even within the organization, risk factors exist in the form of bullying bosses or colleagues, and sexual harassment.

On the micro level, we also evidence *individual risk factors* such as journalists' personal and professional backgrounds, their occupational and political orientations, as well as personal role perceptions. Personality traits can be relevant as some might simply be willing to put themselves at risk, e.g., by reporting from specific situations or places hit by natural disasters or violent conflict (e.g., Dworznik-Hoak 2020; Feinstein 2006). Further, journalistic role perceptions can play a role, too. Journalists understanding themselves as watchdogs or critical change agents are more likely to pose a threat to business and political elites, and to influence public opinions or agendas, than journalists seeing themselves as opportunist facilitators or populist disseminators (Hanitzsch 2011, 485).

Interaction between the three forms of risk factors should also be taken into consideration. Examples abound - from the impact of intersectionality, for instance, being a female journalist in a "male" coded domain, and being female or a minority journalist and engaging online with audiences (e.g., Adams 2018; Chen et al. 2020) to challenging prevailing cultural norms through reporting on certain topics (e.g., immigration politics). Precarious working conditions have also been linked to the femininity of and in the workforce (Hayes and Silke 2019; Örnebring and Möller 2018).

All countries harbour such factors. In their positive form, e.g., constitutional guarantees of press freedom and labour security, these factors could be drivers of journalists' safety; however, more often they are experienced as barriers to safety. For instance, even in countries where press freedom is enshrined in the constitution, the lack of independence, will, and capacity of judicial systems to enforce the rule of law, protect human rights, and respect press freedom become barriers to journalists' safety (Waisbord 2002). They reflect the conflict between journalists' attempts to act with autonomy and the aggressive means criminals, political factions, hate groups, and powerful officials use to try to silence them.

The Consequence of Safety Issues: Work-Related Stress

Antagonists' threats emanate from a resistance to journalistic power (perceived or real), requiring journalists to react in self-defense. Socio-psychologically, the presence of threats creates work-related stress, particularly when resources to react (i.e., to cope) are insufficient. The psychologist Lazarus (1990) conceptualized stress as a process occurring "when demands tax or exceed the person's resources" (3), thus indicating a transactional model between an individual and their environment, and the idea of individual differences and variance in response to stress. According to Lazarus (1990), "[t]ransaction implies that stress is neither in the environmental input nor in the person, but reflects the conjunction of a person with certain motives and beliefs (personal agendas, as it were) with an environment whose characteristics pose harm, threats, or challenges depending on these person characteristics" (3). Based on this, cognitive process models from psychology continue to suggest that journalists experience work-related stress when they perceive an imbalance between the potential harms of work-related risk and their resources, i.e., their ability to avoid or ameliorate these harms (Robinson 2018). Unattended work-related stress may harm journalists' wellbeing and professional performance. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in journalists covering war, disaster, violence or suffering is frequently documented (Feinstein, Audet, and Waknine 2014; Flores Morales, Reyes Pérez, and Reidl Martínez 2012, 2014; Dworznik-Hoak 2020; Seely 2019). Harms from job stress may be similarly physiological as well as psycho-emotional, but less severe than PTSD. The range of harms from stress include physical symptoms, such as fatigue, numbness, exhaustion, headaches, insomnia, stomach ailments, and dermatological disorders as well as psychological and emotional symptoms such as depression, despondency, anxiety, sadness, shame, fear, and pessimism (Hughes et al. 2021). As Robinson (2018) pointed out, the term stress is very contentious and "the ways in which the term *stress* [emphasis in original] is used in research is almost as subjective as an individual's expression of a stress."

Coping, Autonomy and Role Performance

The ability to cope successfully is critical for journalists to continue their work and stay in the profession and is related to power dynamics, i.e., the power vested in the institution of journalism in a country, the power exercised by the organization/its editors, and the professional and personal power of the journalists. According to Lazarus (1990), once a person has appraised a transaction as stressful, they bring coping strategies into play. Coping strategies develop in two steps: an initial emotional appraisal of possible harm, followed by an appraisal of the resources available for coping (Folkman and Lazarus 1980; Lazarus and Folkman 1984).

Coping strategies may focus on fixing a problem (problem-oriented coping) or calming negative emotions, e.g., by reframing the situation (emotion-oriented coping), depending upon whether the person affected feels able to prevent or mitigate a potential harm (Alok et al. 2014; Alonso-Tapia et al. 2016). Coping strategies are not rooted solely in the psychological characteristics of the individual. Rather, coping also has a strong social component: people learn coping strategies from social support groups,