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Safe Journalism? The Specific Nature of Threats in the Journalistic Profession from Women's Perspective

Abstract: The aim of this article is to identify the manifestations and determinants of security in the journalistic profession from women's perspective. Including a gender perspective in the analysis also makes it possible to address the issue of equality within the profession. The article assumes that threats in journalism may affect both men and women; however, because gender inequalities persist, the identified threats are more likely to affect women. To verify this hypothesis, the study employed a comparative method, critical source analysis and in-depth interviews. The findings made it possible to identify the main threats to security in the journalistic profession, encompassing physical and psychological as well as socio-economic security. The research revealed existing gender-related inequalities in this area, with women journalists experiencing a higher incidence of the identified threats, although this is also linked to the type of threat involved.

Key words: journalism, women, security, gender, equality

Introduction

Contrary to widespread belief, issues of security are closely interrelated with the presence of women in the media and in the journalistic profession, as well as with questions of gender equality. Security is most commonly understood as a state free from threats and as one of the fundamental existential needs of human beings, relevant to a wide range of actors – from individuals, through social groups and organisations (including professional organisations such as media editorial offices), up to states and international systems. Gender equality, by contrast, denotes above all the absence of discrimination and equal opportunities for women and men to develop, including in the professional context, for instance within journalism.

Security thus combines objective factors – understood as the absence of external threats to the individual – with their subjective perception. As Ryszard Klamut notes, these two perspectives converge, “for the security of the state, financial, energy, health or otherwise, concerns the individual, and what matters is how the individual perceives and experiences the current situation in terms of absence of threat and psychological comfort” (Klamut, 2012, pp. 2–3). In psychology, security is conceived both as a need and as a value. In the former sense it was conceptualised by Abraham Maslow, the creator of the hierarchy of needs, who placed it immediately after physiological needs – as the second most important necessity for human beings.

Scholarly studies devoted to security issues typically distinguish three fundamental aspects: the subjective (actor-related), the objective (content-related) and the functional (Zięba, 2008, pp. 16–18). The first dimension concerns the certainty of existence and survival as well as the absence of threats for actors within the international system, especially states or nations. The second (objective) dimension relates to the content of security and to the means by which it is shaped and developed across various spheres of socio-political life. The functional dimension, in turn, is understood as the process of confronting divergent interests of participants in the international system. If one treats economic security in the objective sense, it may be analysed, *inter alia*, at the level of social (welfare) or financial security. Within the broader area of socio-economic and occupational security, one may situate the issue of gender equality in journalism – the subject of the present study.

The aim of this article is to identify manifestations and determinants of security in the journalistic profession from a female perspective. Incorporating gender into the analysis also makes it possible to address the question of equality between women and men in this occupation. This aim led to the formulation of two research questions:

- What are the main types of threats to security in the journalistic profession?
- Are such threats gender-conditioned, and do they affect women to a greater extent than men?

The starting point for the research was the assumption that, given gender inequalities present across various sectors of socio-professional life, threats to security in journalism may more strongly affect female journalists.

To verify this hypothesis, the study drew on a source analysis encompassing available scholarly publications and articles from the professional press (Press magazine, 2021–2024), as well as reports from organisations monitoring the media sector, including, among others, the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), UNESCO, the Zamenhof Institute and the International Center for Journalists. In addition, a comparative method was employed to analyse presumed gender differences. In a subsequent stage, a partially structured in-depth interview was used. This part of the research sought to verify previous findings and to deepen knowledge on the threats and their gender linkages.¹ Interviews were conducted with eight female journalists who had worked in the profession for at least ten years. Respondents included television and press journalists employed at both local and national levels in various editorial offices in Poland. This sample selection made it possible to check whether the journalists surveyed see changes in the risks associated with their profession, and whether these risks differ depending on the type of journalism (television journalism vs. press journalism) or place of work (public vs. private media, local vs. nationwide media). The average interview lasted 45 minutes. Questions concerned perceived threats to physical, psychological and socio-economic security. In the first part, respondents were asked to identify possible threats in these areas, after which follow-up questions probed for concrete examples of such threats in their own experience or among colleagues. The interviews also addressed threats to journalism arising from the advent of AI. Interviews were conducted between

¹ The detailed results of the research will be presented in a forthcoming monograph by the authors entitled *Security and Well-Being in the Professional Work of Female Journalists: A Gender Equality Perspective*.

26 November and 19 December 2024 via Teams or by telephone. Transcripts were subjected to qualitative analysis.

With respect to the literature employed, reference was made inter alia to media studies scholarship, including an article by Jacek Sobczak and Ksenia Kakareko and a book by Alina Balczyńska-Kosman, as well as to publications addressing security issues (such as the volume *International Security after the Cold War* edited by Ryszard Zięba and Ryszard Klamut's article "Security as a Psychological Concept"). It is worth emphasising that in Poland there are few monographs devoted to security in the journalistic profession (Magdalena Hodalska's *Journalists' Trauma. Journalism of Trauma* deserves mention here), and works dealing with well-being in this profession are lacking altogether. Empirical, scientifically oriented studies of journalists are undertaken in Poland extremely rarely, as noted by the author of one such study, B. Dobek-Ostrowska (2013, 2016). For this reason, the present article relies to a large extent on reports produced by the aforementioned organisations, as well as on an analysis of the professional press, with a view to identifying threats to security. Few Polish authors also address the issue of gender in journalism (Paluch, 2016; Gober, 2018), which is why the female perspective was included in the analysis.

In global scholarly literature, research on the safety and well-being of journalists has been conducted by Mark Deuze (for example, the articles "Considering Mental Health and Well-Being in Media Work" and "Beyond Journalism: Theorizing the Transformation of Journalism"). Another prominent scholar in this field is Thomas Hanitzsch, the author and co-author of numerous publications on media work and the evolving nature of the journalistic profession – including "Journalists' Perceptions of Precarity: Toward a Theoretical Model" (co-authored with Jana Rick), which examines the low level of economic security within the profession and the article "Conceptualizing Journalists' Safety around the Globe" (co-authors: Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova, Jyotika Ramaprasad and others). It is also worth mentioning a comprehensive review article by Afshin Omid, Cinzia dal Zotto, and Robert G. Picard – "The Nature of Work in the Media Industries: A Literature Review and Future Directions" – which analyses studies on journalists published between 2006 and 2020.

The Journalistic Profession in the Context of Security Threats: The Female Dimension

Pursuant to Article 7(2)(5) of the Press Law Act, a journalist is defined as "a person engaged in editing, creating or preparing press materials, who is in an employment relationship with an editorial office or who carries out such activity on behalf of and authorised by an editorial office" (*Press Law Act...*). When defining the concept of "journalist" a dilemma usually arises as to how it should be understood – as a profession, a service, a mission or a craft. Taking into account the socio-cultural character of work organisation, one may adopt, as Stanisław Mocek observes, that journalism is a synthesis of three dimensions: regularly repeated activities distinguished by their content, the individual's position on the labour market, and life activity determined by professional work (Mocek, 2006, p. 43).

The journalistic profession derives from a tradition of struggle for freedom, truth, social development and equal rights for all. Gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status, have equal opportunities to exercise their full human rights and to contribute to national, political, socio-economic or cultural development, and to benefit from the outcomes of these activities. A gender-equality perspective also entails the equal valuation by society of both the similarities and the differences between women and men and of the diverse roles that genders may choose. As Joanna Kantola notes, European labour markets remain vertically and horizontally segregated by gender (Kantola, 2012, pp. 19–20). This phenomenon concerns workplaces, remuneration and the nature of tasks performed. Labour market inequalities and their consequences for women also stem from the disproportionate distribution of care responsibilities between women and men, with the reconciliation of professional and family roles playing an important part.

All media workers today face various professional challenges, yet women in journalism more frequently encounter the choice between giving up work or foregoing promotion on the career path and motherhood. One may thus agree that work in the media is not gender-neutral (Gober, 2018, p. 136) and that “the media remain masculine” (Gober, 2015). Paulina Januszevska, journalist at *Krytyka Polityczna* among others, writes in her book that Greta Gober’s words indicating that misogyny, alongside money and power, governs Polish media “have not aged a bit” (Januszevska, 2024, p. 264). Gender-related inequalities in the media sphere are likewise confirmed by the 2024 Reuters Institute report (Arguedas, Mukherjee, Nielsen, 2024).

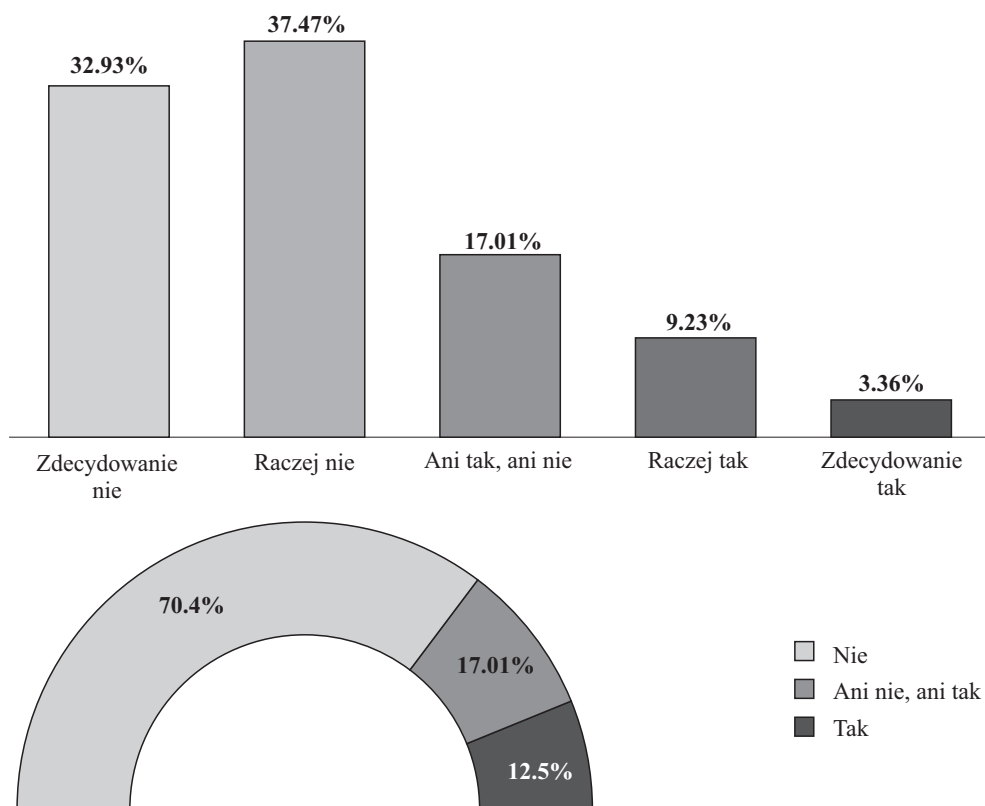
A different perspective on the position of gender in the Polish media sector is provided by the latest results of the Nationwide Research Group’s survey of Poles’ opinions and attitudes towards the media (OGB Report, 2025, pp. 1–80).² The survey was conducted between 13 and 23 January 2025 using the CATI quantitative method. A representative quota-random sample of 1,000 adult residents was examined, taking into account gender, age, education and place of residence. One of the research questions concerned the extent to which the media are male-dominated. Respondents answered the question: “In your opinion, are the media and journalism currently dominated by men, and are women prevented from pursuing careers in the media?” The results of these responses are shown in the figure below.

A clear majority of respondents (70.4%) believe that the media and journalism in Poland are not currently dominated by men; 17.01% have no opinion on this issue, and only 12.56% think that men enjoy a privileged position in the media and that women are prevented from pursuing a career and developing professionally as journalists.

Despite these seemingly optimistic public perceptions of gender equality in the media and journalism, female journalists still have to confront gender stereotypes in many spheres of their professional work, and their personal experiences, as confirmed in interviews, often diverge from the perspective reflected in public opinion. At the same

² The survey of Poles’ attitudes towards the media, entitled “Strategies Supporting Freedom of Expression and Pluralism of Views in the Media and Cultural Policy of the European Union in the Face of Contemporary Challenges and Threats to the Rule of Law in Member States,” was commissioned by OGB and conducted within the framework of a grant awarded to the Department of Media Systems and Media Law under the scientific supervision of Prof. Jędrzej Skrzypczak (Project IDUB, No. 141).

Figure 1. “In your opinion, are the media and journalism currently dominated by men, and are women prevented from pursuing careers in the media?”



Source: Survey of Poles' Opinions (Attitudes towards the Media), www.ogb.pl, p. 22.

time, contemporary journalism is undergoing transformations that are creating more media-related occupations, which are becoming increasingly diverse and in which women are finding employment. Nevertheless, despite these positive changes, men are still typically perceived as the journalists handling “hard” topics – politics, economics or science. Likewise, key decision-making positions in media editorial offices continue to be dominated by men (Balczyńska-Kosman, 2017, pp. 71–80; Arguedas, Mukherjee, Nielsen, 2024). Strengthening the position of women in managerial posts within editorial offices is thus an essential step toward equalising professional opportunities between the sexes in journalism.

When examining the issue of socio-economic security, it should be emphasised that regardless of their position within the editorial hierarchy, female journalists face numerous threats, constraints and challenges in their work. These factors are often present in high-risk areas of the profession. The catalogue of threats associated with practising journalism as a woman is therefore extensive ranging from risks to life and health, through physical and sexual violence, to economic or social challenges. The two main areas of security already mentioned are, on the one hand, physical and psychological

security and, on the other, socio-economic security. Within the first, the analysis will address psycho-physical conditions manifested in, *inter alia*, physical safety, online aggression and hate speech, sexual harassment, mobbing, distress and addictions. The second area encompasses socio-economic conditions, including, among others, women's career paths and remuneration in journalism. These latter issues are particularly closely linked to the realisation of gender equality within the journalistic profession.

Threats to Psycho-Physical Security in Female Journalists' Work Environment Risk of Death, Aggression and Hate Speech Targeting Female Journalists

Aggression is an intentional act aimed at causing psychological or physical harm (discomfort or pain); the concept thus includes physical, verbal (e.g. insults) and psychological aggression (Aronson, Akert, Wilson, 2006, p. 325). Journalists are exposed to aggression and violence while performing their duties, and above all to the risk of death associated with their professional responsibilities. The highest level of threat to health and life occurs among war correspondents. However, journalists working in non-conflict areas may also experience aggression during or as a result of preparing materials, as indicated by reports of international organisations monitoring journalist deaths. According to confirmed data from the Committee to Protect Journalists, between 1992 and 2025 a total of 1,666 journalists were killed in various circumstances (murders, crossfire or combat, other dangerous assignments, unspecified tasks), of whom 1,531 were men and 135 women. Of these, 942 journalists were murdered while performing their work (93 in 2023, 113 in 2024, and 6 at the beginning of 2025). Among those murdered over the 33 years examined by CPJ were 74 women and 868 men. No cases of death among non-binary persons were recorded (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2025, pp. 1–85; RSF's, 2020 Round-up..., 2024). It is also worth noting that a 2009 report on war correspondents revealed that three quarters of correspondents were men, which may explain the disproportion in fatalities (Feinstein, Sinyor, 2009).

With the evolution of contemporary journalism and its increasing shift to the Internet, online aggression – particularly hate speech – has grown in significance. Crucially, in the context analysed here, it affects female journalists to a greater extent. This is indicated by the 2022 UNESCO and International Center for Journalism report (Posetti et al., 2024): 73% of surveyed female journalists had experienced online violence in connection with their work. Twenty-five percent reported threats of physical violence (including death threats), 18% pointed to sexual violence, 13% stated that their relatives had been threatened, and a further 15% experienced misuse of their image – including manipulation of photos and videos, identity theft and unauthorised dissemination. Almost half of the respondents reported harassment through unwanted messages on their private social media accounts. In one in five cases, online violence translated into offline violence (Posetti et al., 2022). Given that in the past decade people have been spending more time online, it is unsurprising that an increasing number of female journalists experience depression, anxiety disorders or even PTSD (Czarnecka, 2023; Boczek, 2023).

These issues were also raised with the journalists interviewed for this study. Most reported encountering manifestations of both physical aggression (such as pushing) and

verbal aggression (insults) in their work. A recurring theme in responses on aggression was political polarisation, which, in the view of the respondents, underlies the intensification of such behaviour. This was noted by journalists working in both public and commercial television. Those with longer professional experience also observed an increase in this phenomenon over the past decade. Previously, they emphasised, the journalistic profession commanded respect; today such an attitude is rarely encountered, which may be linked to the growing social belief that “anyone can be a journalist.” By contrast, online aggression was less frequently experienced by the interviewees: according to the interviews, only one journalist had encountered it, most likely due to her greater activity on social media.

Sexual Harassment and Mobbing

Another threat affecting female journalists and undermining their sense of both physical and psychological security is sexual harassment. Apart from several publications emerging in the wake of the #MeToo movement, a 2023 report by the Zamenhof Institute provided data offering an approximate picture of the scale of sexual harassment among Polish female journalists. In addition to a survey of 286 female journalists, 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with victims of violence (Sexual Harassment Report...). According to the findings, 59% of respondents had encountered harassment at work, although only 18% of such cases were reported. A further 49% had been subjected at work to inappropriate sexually-tinged remarks from colleagues; 25% had witnessed or been the target of inappropriate gestures or behaviours of a sexual nature by co-workers; and 14% had experienced suggestions of benefits in exchange for sexual compliance. Inappropriate remarks from colleagues were most frequently reported by respondents working in radio and television. Importantly, 42% of those surveyed believed such behaviour occurred more often towards women than men. Forty-eight percent experienced unpleasant situations involving two or three individuals. These experiences were accompanied by a sense of helplessness and the absence of effective procedures – 70% of respondents stated that inappropriate behaviour was not reported anywhere, and according to 48% of female journalists, such cases did not reach committees charged with investigating harassment reports at the workplace. As a consequence of their experiences, 33% of the surveyed journalists decided to change jobs (Sexual Harassment Report...).

Mobbing, as defined in the Labour Code, means “actions or behaviour concerning an employee or directed against an employee consisting in persistent and long-term harassment or intimidation of the employee, resulting in a lowered assessment of their professional usefulness, causing or intended to cause humiliation or ridicule, isolating them or eliminating them from a team of co-workers” (Labour Code...). Employers are obliged to counteract mobbing, while an employee who has suffered health damage as a result may claim financial compensation.

There are virtually no studies assessing the scale of mobbing in Poland. In recent months an article by Monika Koźdoń-Dębecka appeared, based on quantitative research among reporters and television presenters of Poland’s three largest stations: TVP, Polsat and TVN. One of the questions concerned mobbing – 66.7% of journalists surveyed by

Koźdoń-Dębecka had encountered this phenomenon, yet did not perceive it as a flaw of the profession (Koźdoń-Dębecka, 2025). Information about cases of mobbing in this milieu periodically reaches public opinion via the media itself (Włodkowska, 2023; Stawiany, 2022; Kamil Durczok leaves...). Interestingly, even when such cases are reported, courts often discontinue proceedings due to limitation of the offence or lack of evidence. In the justification of the Warsaw District Prosecutor's Office one could read that "Tomasz Lis was not a mobber. He was a boss whose management style was stuck in the 1990s – his boorish behaviour, sexually-tinged jokes, threats of dismissal, authoritarian management style increasingly aroused opposition among subordinates. Young people brought up in a modern society, who did not understand that the model of management of the editor-in-chief of Newsweek was once standard in the media, began to see it as unacceptable" (Prosecutor Discontinued...). Similar explanations have appeared regarding Andrzej Skworz, pointing out that the behaviour of the editor-in-chief of Press reflected a management style from the early 1990s in Poland (Piotrowska, 2023). Editorial offices are also trying to reduce the risk of mobbing by introducing anti-mobbing procedures. In 2021 the portal Wirtualne Media asked major Polish media groups about their anti-mobbing procedures and reported cases. All groups contacted – Ringier Axel Springer, Eurozet, Agora, Polsat and TVP—had such procedures in place, and few cases of mobbing were reported (Stawiany, 2022).

The female journalists interviewed for this study overwhelmingly reported no personal experience of sexual harassment. Only one mentioned that she had not only witnessed many such situations but had also personally experienced them; she was a long-serving television journalist in public broadcasting. Regarding mobbing, the respondents had varied experiences. Younger journalists indicated that in larger editorial offices such situations were more controlled. It may also be assumed that among the younger generation there is greater awareness of what mobbing is and a greater ability to defend against it. Representatives of the older generation often expressed doubts as to how to classify situations they had experienced or witnessed. Suggestions appeared that some behaviours stem from the specific nature of the profession – the intense time pressure and responsibility under which journalists work. According to some respondents, swearing or a raised voice are not manifestations of mobbing but a reaction to this pressure.

Distress and Addictions as Threats

In rankings of the most stressful professions, journalism consistently appears near the top. For example, in surveys conducted by the CareerCast service, the occupations of television presenter and newspaper journalist both appeared in the top ten most stressful jobs. This was the case in 2017 as well as in 2023; in the latter survey, television presenter ranked fifth and newspaper journalist sixth (Johnson, 2024). Much scholarly research on stress in journalism focuses on the effects of stress experienced by war reporters or journalists working in areas of natural disasters and catastrophes, where exposure to extreme stressors may result in PTSD. Studies of stress among journalists working in less demanding conditions are rarer. An exception is provided by the Polish research of Anna

Najder and Dorota Merecz from 2013, which showed a relatively lower level of stress among the journalists they studied compared to other professions. The authors explained the discrepancy between their findings and those obtained in studies conducted in other countries for the reasons indicated above (Najder, Merecz, 2014).

It should be emphasised, however, that the stress rankings cited in the introduction take into account such factors as high risk, frequent social contacts, deadlines, working under public scrutiny, competition, high physical and emotional demands, environmental conditions, encountered threats, risk to one's own life and risk associated with the lives of others. As the authors of the report explain, although journalists do not risk their lives to the same extent as police officers or firefighters, their stress level may be equally high due to tight deadlines, fear of lawsuits or a shrinking job market. In addition, journalists provide essential information that can affect people's daily lives. Their work is also subject to public evaluation and, when they tackle dangerous topics, may pose a threat to their life or health (Johnson, 2024).

Magdalena Hodalska, citing psychotraumatologists, notes that "journalism is a high-risk profession, and reporters are exposed to serious problems (divorce, alcoholism, addiction to medication) and vulnerable to health problems (e.g. high blood pressure and heart attacks)" (Hodalska, 2017, p. 18). As she writes, these high costs affect not only war correspondents but also journalists reporting on disasters, travelling to accident sites, murders and other traumatic events. Interestingly, even "macabre footage sent in by eyewitnesses of tragic events, showing victims of attacks, accidents and disasters, means that the psychological burden associated with viewing such material can result in post-traumatic stress, which affects journalists working with traumatic images as often as war correspondents" (Hodalska, 2017, p. 24).

The stress experienced at work may lead to seeking solutions that provide momentary relief, such as resorting to various addictions. In 2015 the nationwide "Social Diagnosis" survey revealed that journalism – alongside medicine and IT – is among the professions with the highest levels of alcohol consumption (Czapiński, 2015). There are no new studies on this problem, although from time to time articles appear on various types of addiction within this professional group (Journalists and IT Specialists...; Malewska, 2016; Plaskota, 2023; Kurianiuk, 2023; Januszevska, 2024; Parka, 2023). Due to the aforementioned lack of research, it is difficult to assess whether gender differentiates the level of risk in this area. Undoubtedly, however, addictions of various kinds – from alcoholism to psychoactive substance dependence and gambling – constitute serious threats to security and well-being in the journalistic profession.

In the authors' own research, questions were asked both about stress levels and their sources, and about addictions among journalists. Respondents indicated that stress is primarily linked to time pressure and the lack of clearly defined working hours. However, the latter statement was voiced mainly by long-serving journalists and derived from the belief that "one is a journalist all the time," not only during working hours. Voices also emerged concerning contact with difficult topics and situations in which one would like to help but cannot. It appears, however, that the surveyed female journalists did not consider their profession particularly stressful. One respondent pointed out that, compared to occupations such as firefighter, doctor or nurse, it is hard to regard journalism as equally burdensome.

On the issue of addictions the answers were fairly consistent, especially with regard to the experiences of certain journalistic generations. Female journalists with longer professional experience noted that smoking and frequent alcohol consumption – even during working hours – were not exceptional twenty or thirty years ago. Today this perspective has changed decisively. Younger respondents indicated that smoking or drinking alcohol is no longer “in fashion,” although they still hear about addicted individuals within the media environment.

Threats to Socio-Economic Security in Female Journalists' Work Environment (Career Advancement, Decision-Making Opportunities, Equal Pay)

In many industries – such as sport, programming, new technologies or the hard sciences – masculinity is treated as the default point of reference, and recruitment and promotion processes unconsciously favour men. As Caroline Criado Perez argues, the consequence of a male-dominated culture is the perception of the male perspective as universal and the female perspective – although women constitute more than half of humanity – as something niche (Perez, 2020, p. 27). Journalism is likewise a profession in which, although women predominate structurally, key editorial positions and decision-making powers are mostly held by men. A UNESCO report notes that in 2017 differences between women and men performing the same work reached as high as 300%, demonstrating that even reputable media organisations appear to ignore gender equality in determining who produces and edits particular content (Ross, 2018).

A dynamic and insightful picture of changes in gender participation in the media and in journalism is provided by the cyclical reports of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), a non-governmental organisation operated by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), which promotes values of equality and social justice in communication. WACC's systematic studies, conducted since 1995 and published in the form of reports, present a range of indicators concerning the representation and activity of women and men in the media, revealing a clear gender asymmetry, with male dominance both in the content of news messages and in key decision-making processes in media organisations. The reports appear every five years, and the latest findings from 2020 indicate that much remains to be done to achieve gender equality and strengthen the position of women in the media. The most recent report reveals that women account for only 25% of the people who are sources of information or who are featured in news stories – a slight change from earlier results of 17% in 1995 and 24% in 2015 (*Who Makes...*, 2020). For Poland, in the ranking covering the gender of presenters, reporters, topics and news sources in newspapers, radio and television, women constitute 44% of presenters, 37% of reporters and 27% of those quoted in the media (*Who Makes...*, 2020). It is also noteworthy that the Gender Equality Measure for news media (GEM-I) – a unified measure of the level of gender equality in news media – stands at –53.942 for Poland (*Who Makes...*, 2020). The index covers six GMMP indicators and takes into account the presence of women in news programmes as subjects and sources; as reporters; in economic and business coverage; in stories about politics and decision-making; and as spokespersons and experts in the media. The index ranges from –100 (only men

visible in news programmes) to +100 (only women visible), with 0 indicating full gender equality. For comparison, the index is -25.961 for Sweden and -29.391 for the United States (*Who Makes...*, 2020).

Data published in the Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media show that despite relatively balanced proportions of women and men employed in editorial offices in Poland, women's presence in editorial management stands at 41.9%, while the "glass ceiling" appears at the level of top management – women make up only 25% of employees and 29.5% of editorial boards (*Global Report on...*, 2011). The most optimistic picture concerns pay differences between women and men: the gender pay gap in Poland was relatively low at just 4.5% in 2020, one of the lowest in Europe. However, this seemingly positive image is distorted by the so-called adjusted gender pay gap, which includes unobservable factors for researchers, such as gender discrimination and career breaks, and which in Poland stands at 10.4% (*Sytuacja kobiet...*, 2023, pp. 20–22). Although these data refer to general labour market trends in Poland, they correspond to the situation of women's employment in the media sector. In Poland, women remain under-represented in managerial positions, although the situation is gradually improving. Unfortunately, due to the lack of detailed statistics on the scale of female and male employment in media editorial offices, and based mainly on analyses of the editorial offices' own websites, it can only be estimated that in many Polish media companies the proportion of women in decision-making positions does not exceed 40%. For example, the management team of Warner Bros. Discovery, which owns the TVN television station, currently consists of 11 people, three of whom are women. The group is chaired by Kasia Kieli, who heads the management board. At Telewizja Polsat, only two of the eight members of the company's Supervisory Board are women, and the six-member Management Board of Polsat includes just one woman. In many large and influential editorial offices in Poland, editor-in-chief positions are still predominantly held by men – as exemplified by *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Polityka*, *Fakt*, *Newsweek*, *Wirtualna Polska*, *Onet* and *Interia*. At the same time, it should be noted that in a number of editorial offices women serve as deputies or heads of departments.

A key motivator in women's (and men's) journalistic work, providing a sense of security, is a stable salary. Most large media editorial offices in Poland employ journalists under full-time contracts with fixed monthly pay. Men have a slight advantage in enjoying these employment conditions in news media, while women constitute the overwhelming majority of those employed part-time. Additional support in media organisations also comes in the form of lump-sum payments, so-called "per-piece" fees, or individual awards for female journalists. Gender, however, is not as significant a factor differentiating pay levels as other aspects such as type of media, scale of reach and location of the editorial office, experience, qualifications or journalist recognition. According to data from the Nationwide Salary Survey by Sedlak & Sedlak, the median salary of journalists in 2023 in Poland, irrespective of gender, was PLN 4,154 net (Journalists' Pay...).

With regard to socio-economic security, the journalists interviewed for this study voiced the greatest concerns. This was particularly true for those who began their careers in the mid-1990s. Lack of economic security resulting from the absence of open-ended contracts and low job satisfaction was the reason two respondents left the profession. Another problem reported was the lack of transparent promotion rules or of career devel-

opment prospects in general. Younger-generation journalists employed at a commercial station did not report such problems. It should be remembered, however, as the respondents also noted, that high salaries in journalism are more the exception than the rule.

An interesting theme that emerged in several journalists' statements concerned the discomfort associated with ageing, which in the case of on-screen female journalists leads to their being removed from such work. According to respondents, there are countries where the age of female journalists is not an issue. In Poland, however, age discrimination primarily affects women working in television.

Conclusions

The research conducted made it possible to identify the key threats associated with practising journalism, encompassing physical and psychological security as well as socio-economic security. It should be clarified that the level of threat varies depending on the type of journalism. For war correspondents or investigative journalists it is very high, whereas for television presenters it is low. In this area gender does not significantly differentiate the level of threat: women and men are equally exposed to death or injury. However, the findings show that women are more vulnerable to online aggression, which often carries over into real life. They are also more frequently subjected to sexual harassment, as confirmed by Polish studies. Unfortunately, there are no reliable data on mobbing in journalism, making it difficult to assess either the overall level of this threat or its gender dimension.

With respect to socio-economic security, gender inequalities remain observable. The extent to which they affect women's security in this area may also be linked to the national culture or the organisational culture of a specific media institution. Problems such as the absence of open-ended employment contracts and low remuneration in journalism (high rates being reserved for a very narrow group of journalistic "stars") affect both sexes. However, women more often work part-time, and reconciling domestic and professional responsibilities in such a highly demanding profession may be more difficult for them. This can weaken their chances of promotion, which is reflected in disparities at the highest positions in media institutions.

Based on the empirical data collected, it can be stated that the female journalists surveyed perceived the level of threats in journalism in varied ways. In their statements they reported encountering aggression in the course of their professional duties, and those who were active online also experienced such violence there. The vast majority did not report being victims of sexual harassment, and with respect to mobbing they indicated that some behaviours may stem from the specifics of the profession. The very high level of time pressure means that editorial offices often neglect conventions; swearing and raised voices occur, which may be perceived as inappropriate behaviour. The journalists surveyed rated socio-economic security low. Lack of financial stability or remuneration disproportionate to the level of workload and responsibility contributed to some respondents leaving the profession. However, they considered this problem to affect both sexes. The interview findings are consistent with Koźdoń-Dębecka's research, in which journalists surveyed by questionnaire declared that low pay most strongly affects their

well-being (Koźdoń-Dębecka, 2025). A gender-related issue, however, is the greater difficulty in reconciling professional and family roles, as well as the removal of women of a certain age from on-screen work.

Today an increasing number of professional organisations dealing with the media or bringing together journalists are taking action to reduce the occurrence of the problems described in this article. Within the UN and the European Union various initiatives are being undertaken to eliminate gender inequalities, including in journalism (Gober, 2018).

Ensuring security in its various dimensions – important in itself – appears particularly vital in the context of a profession of such social significance and of its role in democracy and the values realised within that system. Access to reliable and independent information is key to the exercise of freedom of expression and an important element of social oversight of the actions of those in power (Sobczak, Kakareko, 2017). A sense of threat or experienced distress can impede the performance of tasks in journalistic work.

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Bezpieczne dziennikarstwo?

Specyfika zagrożeń w zawodzie dziennikarza z perspektywy kobiet

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest identyfikacja przejawów i determinant bezpieczeństwa w zawodzie dziennikarza z perspektywy kobiet. Uwzględnienie perspektywy płci w analizie umożliwia również poruszenie kwestii równości w obrębie zawodu. W artykule przyjęto założenie, że zagrożenia w dziennikarstwie mogą dotyczyć zarówno mężczyzn, jak i kobiet; jednak ze względu na utrzymujące się nierówności płci zidentyfikowane zagrożenia częściej dotyczą kobiet. Aby zweryfikować tę hipotezę, w badaniu wykorzystano metodę porównawczą, krytyczną analizę źródeł oraz wywiady pogłębione. Uzyskane wyniki umożliwiły identyfikację głównych zagrożeń dla bezpieczeństwa w zawodzie dziennikarskim, obejmujących bezpieczeństwo fizyczne i psychiczne, a także społeczno-ekonomiczne. Badania ujawniły istniejące nierówności związane z płcią w tym obszarze, przy czym dziennikarki doświadczają w większym stopniu występowania zidentyfikowanych zagrożeń, choć jest to również związane z rodzajem tych zagrożeń.

Słowa kluczowe: dziennikarstwo, kobiety, bezpieczeństwo, płć, równość

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